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INCLUDING

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PREFACE

TO THE TRAGEDIES.

I AM desirous to anticipate a censure which the critical reader will be ready to bring forward on the apparent inconsistency between the contents of this volume, composed of dramatic pieces, and several sentiments not unfrequently introduced in some of the other volumes, respecting the dangerous tendency of certain public amusements, in which dramatic entertainments will be naturally included. The candid reader will be able to solve the paradox, when it is intimated at what different periods of life these different pieces were written. The dates, if they were regularly preserved, would explain that the seeming disagreement does not involve a contradiction, as it proceeds not from an inconsistency, but from a revolution in the sentiments of the author.

From my youthful course of reading, and early habits of society and conversation, aided perhaps by that natural but secret bias which the inclination gives to the judgment, I had been led to entertain that common, but, as I must now think, delusive and groundless hope, that the stage, under certain regulations, might be converted into a school of virtue; and thus, like many others, inferred, by a seemingly reasonable conclusion, that though a bad play would always be a bad thing, yet the representation of a good one might become not only harmless, but useful; and that it required nothing more than a correct judgment and a critical selection, to transform a pernicious pleasure into a profitable entertainment.

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On these grounds (while perhaps, as was intimated above, it was nothing more than the indulgence of a propensity) I was led to flatter myself that it might be rendering that inferior service to society which the fabricator of safe and innocent amusements may reasonably be supposed to confer, to attempt some theatrical compositions, which, whatever other defects might be justly imputable to them, should at least be found to have been written on the side of virtue and modesty; and which should neither hold out any corrupt image to the mind, nor any impure description to the fancy.

As the following pieces were written and performed at an early period of my life, under the above impressions, I feel it a kind of duty (imploring pardon for the unavoidable egotism to which it leads) not to send them afresh into the world in this collection, without prefixing to them a candid declaration of my altered view. In so doing, I am fully aware that I equally subject myself to the opposite censures of two different classes of readers, one of which will think that the best evidence of my sincerity would have been the suppression of the tragedies themselves, while the other will reprobate the change of sentiment which gives birth to the qualifying preface.

I should perhaps have been inclined to adopt the first of these two opinions, had it not occurred to me that the suppression would be thought disingenuous; and had I not been also desirous of grounding on the publication, though in a very cursory manner, my sentiments on the general tendency of the drama; for it appeared but fair and candid to include in this view my own compositions; and thus, in some measure, though without adverting to them, to involve myself in the general object of my own animadversions.

I am not even now about to contravert the assertion of some of the ablest critics, that a well written tragedy

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is perhaps one of the noblest efforts of the human mind; I am not even now about to deny, that of all public amusements it is the most interesting, the most intellectual, and the most accommodated to the taste and capacities of a rational being; nay, that it is almost the only one which has *mind* for its object; which has the combined advantage of addressing itself to the imagination, the judgment, and the heart; that it is the only public diversion which calls out the higher energies of the understanding in the composition, and awakens the most lively and natural feelings of the heart in the representation.

With all this decided superiority in point of mental pleasure which the stage possesses over every other species of public entertainment, it is not to be wondered at that its admirers and advocates, even the most respectable, should cherish a hope, that under certain restrictions, and under an improved form, it might be made to contribute to instruction as well as to pleasure; and it is on this plausible ground that we have heard so many ingenious defences of this species of amusement.

What the stage might be under another and an imaginary state of things, it is not very easy for us to know, and therefore not very important to inquire. Nor is it indeed the soundest logic to argue on the possible goodness of a thing, which, in the present circumstances of society, is doing positive evil, from the imagined good that thing might be conjectured to produce in a supposed state of unattainable improvement. Would it not be more safe and simple to determine our judgment as to the character of the thing in question, on the more visible and therefore more rational grounds of its actual state, and from the effects which it is known to produce in that state?

For, unfortunately, this Utopian good cannot be produced, until not only the stage itself has undergone a

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complete purification, but until the audience shall be purified also. For we must first suppose a state of society in which the spectators will be disposed to relish all that is pure, and to reprobate all that is corrupt, before the system of a pure and uncorrupt theatre can be adopted with any reasonable hope of success. There must always be a congruity between the taste of the spectator and the nature of the spectacle, in order to effect that point of union which can produce pleasure: for it must be remembered that people go to a play, not to be *instructed*, but to be *pleased*. As we do not send the blind to an exhibition of pictures, nor the deaf to a concert, so it would be leaving the projected plan of a pure stage in a state of imperfection, unless the general corruption of human nature itself were so reformed as to render the amusements of a perfectly purified stage palatable. If the sentiments and passions exhibited were no longer accommodated to the sentiments and passions of the audience, corrupt nature would soon withdraw itself from the vapid and inappropriate amusement; and *thin*, I will not say *empty*, benches would too probably be the reward of the conscientious reformer.

Far be it from me to wish to restore that obsolete rubbish of ignorance and folly with which the monkish legends furnished out the rude materials of our early drama: I mean those uncouth pieces, in which, under the titles of *Mysteries* and *Moralities*, the most sacred persons were introduced as interlocutors: in which events too solemn for exhibition, and subjects too awful for detail, were brought before the audience with a formal gravity more offensive than levity itself. The superstitions of the cloyster were considered as suitable topics for the diversions of the stage; and celestial intelligences, uttering the sentiments and language, and blended with the buffooneries of Bartholomew fair, were regarded as appropriate subjects of merry-making for an

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holiday audience. But from this holy mummery, at which piety, taste, and common sense would be equally revolted, I return to the existing state of things.*

I have never perused any of those treatises, excellent as some of them are said to be, which pious divines have written against the pernicious tendency of theatrical entertainment. The convictions of my mind have arisen solely from experience and observation. I shall not, therefore, go over the well-trodden ground of those who have inveighed, with too much justice, against the immoral lives of too many stage professors, allowing always for some very honourable exceptions. I shall not remark on the gross and palpable corruptions of those plays which are obviously written with an open disregard to all purity and virtue: nor shall I attempt to show whether any very material advantage would arise to the vain and the dissipated, were they to exclude the theatre from its turn in their undiscriminated round of promiscuous pleasure. But I would coolly and respectfully address a few words to those many worthy and conscientious persons, who would not perhaps so early and incautiously expose their youthful offspring to the temptations of an amusement of which they themselves could be brought to see and to feel the existence.

The question then, which with great deference I would propose, is not, whether those who risk every thing may not risk this also; but whether the more cor-

*An enthusiast to the literature of my own country, and so jealous of its fame as grudgingly to allow its comparative inferiority in any one instance, I am yet compelled to acknowledge, that as far as my slender reading enables me to form a judgment, the English dramatic poets are in general more licentious than those of most other countries. In that profligate reign

When all the Muses were debauch'd at court,

the stage attained its highest degree of dissoluteness. Mr. Garrick did a great deal towards its purification. It is said not to have since kept the ground it then gained.

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rect and considerate Christian might not find it worth while to consider if the amusement in question be entirely compatible with his avowed character? whether it be entirely consistent with the clearer views of one who professes to live in the sure and certain hope of that immortality which is brought to light by the Gospel?

For however weighty the arguments in favour of the superior *rationality* of plays may be found in the scale, when a rational being puts one amusement in the balance against another; however fairly he may exalt the stage against other diversions, as being more adapted to a man of sense; yet this perhaps will not quite vindicate it in the opinion of the more scrupulous Christian, who will not allow himself to think that of two evils *either* may be chosen. *His* amusements must be blameless as well as ingenious, safe as well as rational; moral as well as intellectual. They must have nothing in them which may be likely to excite any of the tempers which it is his daily task to subdue; any of the passions which it is his constant business to keep in order. *His* chosen amusements must not deliberately add "to the weight" which he is commanded "to lay aside;" they should not irritate the "besetting sin" against which he is struggling; they should not obstruct that "spiritual mindedness" which he is told "is life and peace;" they should not inflame that "lust of the flesh, that lust of the eye, and that pride of life" which he is forbidden to gratify. A religious person, who occasionally indulges in an amusement not consonant to his general views and pursuits, inconceivably increases his own difficulties, by whetting tastes, and exciting appetites, which it will cut him out so much work to counteract, as will greatly overbalance, in a conscientious mind, the short and trivial enjoyment. I speak now on the mere question of pleasure. Nay the more keen his relish for the amusement, the more exquisite his discernment of the beauties of composition,

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or the graces of action may be, the more prudent he may perhaps find it to deny himself the gratification which is enjoyed at the slightest hazard of his higher interests: a gratification which to him will be the more dangerous in proportion as it is more poignantly felt.

A Christian in our days is seldom called in his ordinary course to great and signal sacrifices, to very striking and very ostensible renunciations; but he is daily called to a quiet, uniform, constant series of self-denial in small things. A dangerous and bewitching, especially if it be not a disreputable pleasure, may perhaps have a just place among those sacrifices: and if he be really in earnest, he will not think it too much to renounce such petty enjoyments, were it only from the single consideration that it is well to seize every little occasion which occurs of evidencing to himself that he is constantly on the watch; and of proving to the world, that in small things as well as in great he is a follower of *Him who pleased not himself.*

Little, unobserved, and unostentatious abstinences are among the silent deeds of his daily warfare. And whoever brings himself to exercise this habitual self-denial, even in doubtful cases, will soon learn from happy experience, that in many instances abstinence is much more easily practised than temperance. There is in this case no excited sensibility to allay; there is no occasional remorse to be quieted; there is no lost ground to be recovered, no difficult backing out, only to get again to the same place where we were before. This observation adopted into practice might, it is presumed, effectually abolish the qualifying language of many of the more *sober* frequenters of the theatre, "that they go but *seldom*, and never but to a *good play*." We give these moderate and discreet persons all due praise for comparative sobriety. But while they *go at all*, the principle is the same; for they sanction, by going sometimes, a diversion which is not to be defended on strict Christian principles.

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Indeed their ackowledging that it should be but sparingly frequented, probably arises from a conviction that it is not *quite* right.

I have already remarked that it is not the object of this address to pursue the usual track of attacking *bad* plays, of which the more prudent and virtuous seldom vindicate the principle, though they do not always scrupulously avoid attending the exhibition. I impose rather on myself the unpopular task of animadverting on the dangerous effects of those which come under the description of *good* plays; for from those chiefly arises the danger (if danger there be) to good people.

Now, with all the allowed superiority justly ascribed to pieces of a better cast, it does not seem to be a complete justification of the amusement, that the play in question is more chaste in the sentiment, more pure in the expression, and more moral in the tendency than those which are avowedly objectionable; though I readily concede all the degrees of distinction, and very important they are, between such compositions and those of the opposite character. But the point for which I am contending is of another and of a distinct nature; namely, that there will, generally speaking, still remain, even in tragedies, otherwise the most unexceptionable, provided they are sufficiently impassioned to produce a powerful effect on the feelings, and have spirit enough to deserve to become popular; there will still remain an essential radical defect. What I insist on is, that there almost inevitably runs through the whole web of the tragic drama (for to this least blameable half of stage composition I confine my remarks; as against comedy still stronger objections may be urged) a prominent thread of false principle. It is generally the leading object of the poet to erect a standard of *Honour* in direct opposition to the standard of *Christianity*. And this is not done subordinately, incidentally, occa-

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spiritually; but worldly honour is the very soul, and spirit, and life-giving principle of the drama. Honour is the religion of tragedy. It is her moral and political law. Her dictates form its institutes. Fear and shame are the capital crimes in her code. Against these all the eloquence of her most powerful pleaders; against these her penal statutes, pistol, sword, and poison, are in full force. Injured honour can only be vindicated at the point of the sword; the stains of injured reputation can only be washed out in blood. Love, jealousy, hatred, ambition, pride, revenge, are too often elevated into the rank of splendid virtues, and form a dazzling system of worldly morality, in direct contradiction to the spirit of that religion whose characteristics are "charity, meekness, peaceableness, long-suffering, gentleness, forgiveness." "The fruits of the Spirit" and the *fruits of the stage*, if the parallel were followed up, as it might easily be, would perhaps exhibit as pointed a contrast as human imagination could conceive.

I by no means pretend to assert that religion is excluded from tragedies; it is often incidently introduced; and many a period is beautifully turned, and many a moral is exquisitely pointed with the finest sentiments of piety. But the single grains of this counteracting principle scattered up and down the piece, do not extend their antiseptic property in a sufficient degree to preserve from corruption the body of a work, the general spirit and leading tempers of which, as was said above, are evidently not drawn from that meek religion, the very essence of which consists in "casting down high imaginations:" while on the other hand, the leaven of the predominating evil secretly works and insinuates itself, till the whole mass becomes impregnated by the pervading principle. Now if the directing principle be unsound, the virtues growing out of it will be unsound also; and no subordinate merit, no collateral excellencies, can operate with effectual potency against an evil

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which is of prime and fundamental force and energy, and which forms the very essence of the work.

A learned and witty friend, who thought differently on this subject, once asked me if I went so far as to think it necessary to try the merit of a song or a play by the Ten Commandments. To this may we not venture to answer, that neither a song nor a play should at least contain any thing *hostile* to the Ten Commandments. That if harmless merriment be not expected to *advance* religion, we must take care that it do not *oppose* it; that if we concede that our amusements are not expected to make us better than we are, ought we not to condition that they do not make us worse than they find us? If so then, whatever pleasantry of idea, whatever gayety of sentiment, whatever airiness of expression we innocently admit, should we not jealously watch against any unsoundness in the general principle, any mischief in the prevailing tendency?

We cannot be too often reminded, that we are to an inconceivable degree the creatures of habit. Our tempers are not principally governed, nor our characters formed by single marked actions; nor is the colour of our lives often determined by prominent detached circumstances; but the character is gradually moulded by a series of seemingly insignificant but constantly recurring practices, which, incorporated into our habits, become part of ourselves.

Now as these lesser habits, if they take a wrong direction, silently and imperceptibly eat out the very heart and life of vigorous virtue, they will be almost more sedulously watched by those who are careful to keep their consciences tenderly alive to the perception of sin (however they may elude the attention of ordinary Christians) than actions which deter by bold and decided evil.

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When it is recollected how many young men pick up their habits of thinking and their notions of morality from the playhouse, it is not perhaps going too far to suspect, that the principles and examples exhibited on the stage may contribute in their full measure and proportion towards supplying a sort of a regular aliment to the appetite (how dreadfully increased!) for duelling, and even suicide. For if religion teaches, and experience proves, the immense importance to our tempers and morals of a regular attendance on public worship, which attendance is only required of us one day in a week; and if it be considered how much the heart and mind of the attentive hearer becomes gradually imbued with the principles infused by this stated though unfrequent attendance; who, that knows any thing of the nature of the human heart, will deny how much more deep and lasting will be the impression likely to be made by a far more frequent attendance at those places where sentiments of a direct contrary tendency are exhibited: exhibited too with every addition which can charm the imagination and captivate the senses. Once in a week it may be, the young minds are braced by the invigorating principles of a strict and self-denying religion: on the intermediate nights their good resolutions (if such they have made) are melted down with all that can relax the soul, and dispose it to yield to the temptations against which it was the object of the Sunday's lecture to guard and fortify it. In the one case, there is every thing held out which can inflame or sooth corrupt nature, in opposition to those precepts which, in the other case, were directed to subdue it. And this one grand and important difference between the two cases should never be overlooked, that religious instruction applied to the human heart is seed sown in an uncultivated soil, where much is to be cleared, to be broken up, and to be rooted out, before good fruit will be produced: where-

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as the theatrical seed, by lighting on the fertile soil prepared by nature for the congenial implantation, is likely to shoot deep, spread wide, and bring forth fruit in abundance.

But to drop all metaphor.—They are told—and from whose mouth do they hear it? that "blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, and the peace-makers." Will not these, and such like humbling propositions, delivered one day in seven only, in all the sober and beautiful simplicity of our church, with all the force of truth indeed, but with all its plainness also, be more than counterbalanced by the speedy and much more frequent recurrence of the nightly exhibition, whose precise object it too often is, not only to preach, but to personify doctrines in diametrical and studied opposition to poverty of spirit, to purity, to meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness. Doctrines, not simply expressed, as those of the Sunday are, in the naked form of axioms, principles, and precepts, but realized, embodied, made alive, furnished with organs, clothed, decorated, brought into lively discourse, into interesting action; enforced with all the energy of passion, adorned with all the graces of language, and exhibited with every aid of emphatical delivery, every attraction of appropriate gesture. To such a complicated temptation is it wise, voluntarily, studiously, unnecessarily to expose frail and erring creatures? Is not the conflict too severe? Is not the competition too unequal?

It is pleaded by the advocates for church music, that the organ and its vocal accompaniments assist devotion, by enlisting the senses on the side of religion; and it is justly pleaded as an argument in favour of both, because the affections may fairly and properly derive every honest aid from any thing which helps to draw them off from the world to God. But is it not equally true, that the same species of assistance, in a wrong direction,

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will produce an equally forcible effect in its way, and at least equally contribute in drawing off the soul from God to the world? I do not presume to say that the injury will be inevitable, much less that it will be irretrievable: but I dare repeat that it is exposing feeble virtue to a powerful temptation; and to a hazard so great, that were the same reason applied to any worldly subject, it would be thought a folly to venture on any undertaking where the chances against our coming off unhurt were so obviously against us. Besides, if we may pursue the doctrine of chances a little farther, that is at best playing a most unprofitable game, where, if we could even be sure that nothing would be lost, it is clear to demonstration that nothing *can* be gained; so that the certain risk is not even counterbalanced by the possible success.

It is not in point to the present design to allude to the multitude of theatrical sentiments which seem to be written as if in avowed opposition to such precepts as "Swear not at all:"—"He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery in his heart," &c. &c. We are willing to allow that this last offence at least is generally, I would it were invariably, confined to those more incorrect dramas which we do not now profess to consider. Yet it is to be feared we should not find many pieces (are we sure we can find one?) entirely exempt from the first heavy charge. And it is perhaps one of the most invincible objections to many tragedies, otherwise not very exceptionable, that the awful and tremendous name of the infinitely glorious God is shamefully and almost incessantly introduced in various scenes, both in the way of asseveration and of invocation.

Besides, the term *good* and *bad* play are relative; for we are so little exact in our general definitions, that the character given to the piece often takes its colour from the character of him who gives it. Passages which to

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the decent moral man (him I mean who is decent and moral on mere worldly principles) are to the "purged eye" of a Christian disgusting by their vanity, and offensive by their levity, to speak in the gentlest terms.

But more especially the prime animating spirit of many of our more decorous dramas seems to furnish a strong contrast to the improved and enlarged comment of our Saviour in the New Testament, on the divine prohibition against murder in the Old, in the wo denounced against anger, as containing in itself the seed and principle of murder: anger, and its too usual concomitant, revenge, being the main spring on which some of our best tragedies turns.

The eloquent apologies, and the elaborate vindication of the crimes resulting from the point of honour and the dread of shame, and with such apologies and vindications some of our most approved pieces abound, too temptingly invite the high unbroken spirit of a warm youth, from admiring such sentiments to adopt them: and he is liable to be stimulated first to the commission of the crime, and after he has committed it, to the hope of having his reputation cleared, by the perpetual eulogies these flattering scenes bestow on rash and intemperate bravery; on the *dignity* of that spirit which cannot brook an insult; and on that *generous* sense of wounded honour which is ever on the watch to revenge itself. And when he hears the bursts of applause with which these sallies of resentment, these vows of revenge, these determinations to destroy or be destroyed, this solemn obtesting the great Judge of hearts to witness the innocence of—perhaps a very criminal action or intention;—when, I say, a hot-headed young man witnesses the enthusiasm of admiration which such expressions excite in a transported audience, will it not operate as a kind of stimulus to him to adopt a similar conduct, should he ever be placed in similar circumstances? and will it not furnish him with

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a sort of criterion how such maxims would be received, and such conduct approved in real life? For the danger does not lie merely in his hearing such sentiments delivered from the stage, but also in seeing how favourably they are received by the audience; received too by those persons who, should he realize these sentiments, would probably be the arbiters of his conduct. These are to him a kind of anticipated jury. The scene is as it were the rehearsal of an acquittal at the bar of that world whose tribunal is perhaps, unhappily for him, considered as his last appeal; for it is not probably hazarding too much to conclude, that by the sort of character we are considering, human opinion will be looked upon as the highest motive of action, human praise as the highest reward, and human censure as an evil to be deprecated, even by the loss of his soul.

If one of the most virtuous of poets and of men, by the cool, deliberate, argumentative manner in which he makes his Roman hero destroy himself; this hero too a pagan, consistently illustrating by this action an historical fact, and acting in a natural conformity to his own stoical principles;—if I say, under all these palliating circumstances, the ingenious sophistry by which the poet was driven to mitigate the crime of suicide, in order to accommodate the sentiment to the real character of his hero;—if this Christian poet, even to his own private friend and literary associate, could appear, by the specious reasoning of his famous soliloquy, to vindicate self-murder, so that the unhappy Budgell exclaimed, when falling by his own hand,

> What Cato did, and Addison approv'd,
> Must sure be right:——

If, I say, under all the extenuating circumstances here detailed, such a dreadful effect could be produced from a cause so little expected or intended by its author to produce it, how much more probable are similar ill con-

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sequences likely to arise from similar causes in the hands of a poet less guarded and worse principled; and whose heroes have perhaps neither the apology of acknowledged paganism, nor the sanction of historic truth? For Addison, who in general has made his piece a vehicle of the noblest and most patriotic sentiments, could not avoid making his catastrophe just what he has made it, without violating a notorious fact, and falsifying the character he exhibits.

Even in those plays in which the principles which false honour teaches are neither professedly inculcated nor vindicated; nay, where moreover the practices above alluded to, and especially the practice of duelling, are even reprobated in the progress of the piece; yet the hero who has been reprieved from sin during four acts by the sage remonstrance of some interfering friend, or the imperious power of beauty; beauty, which is to a stage hero that restraining or impelling power which law, or conscience, or Scripture, are to other men; still in the conclusion, when the intrigue is dextrously completed, when the passion is worked up to its *acmé*, and the valedictory scene is so near at hand that it becomes inconvenient to the poet that the impetuosity of his hero should be any longer restrained; when his own patience and the expostulating powers of his friend are both exhausted together, and he seasonably winds up the drama by stabbing either his worst enemy or his benefactor, or, as it still more frequently happens, himself: still, notwithstanding his criminal catastrophe, the hero has been exhibited through all the preceding scenes as such a combination of perfections; his behaviour has been so brave and so generous (and bravery and generosity are two qualities which the world boldly stakes against both tables of the decalogue) that the youthful spectator, especially if he have that amiable warmth and sensibility of soul which lay him so peculiarly open to seduction,

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is too much tempted to consider as venial the sudden and unpremeditated crime to which the unresisted impulse of the moment may have driven so accomplished a character. And a little tame tag of morality, set to a few musical periods by the unimpassioned friend, is borne down, absorbed, lost, in the impetuous but too engaging character of the feeling, fiery hero; a character, the errors of which are now consummated by an act of murder, so affectingly managed, that censure is swallowed up in pity: the murderer is absolved by the weeping auditory, who are ready, if not to justify the crime, yet to vindicate the criminal. The drowsy moral at the close, slowly attempts to creep after the poison of the piece; but it creeps in vain; it can never expel that which it can never reach; for one stroke of feeling, one natural expression of the passions, be the principle right or wrong, carries away the affections of the auditor beyond any of the poet's force of reasoning to control. And *they* know little of the power of the dramatic art, or of the conformation of the human mind, who do not know that the heart of the feeling spectator is always at the command of the passions in the hand of a true poet; who snatches him with uncontrolled dominion

To Thebes and Athens when he will, and where.

Now to counteract the bias given by the passions, all the flowers of rhetoric, all the flights of mere poetry, and all the blunted weapons of logic united, are ineffectual. Of course, the concluding antidote never defeats the mischief of the piece; the effect of the smooth moral is instantly obliterated, while that of the indented passion is perhaps indelible.

Let me now for a moment turn to the younger part of that sex, to whose service I have generally devoted my principal attention. A virtuous young woman, it will be said, who has been correctly educated, will turn with abhorrence from the unchaste scenes of a *loose* play. It

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is indeed so to be hoped; and yet many plays which really deserve that character, escape that denomination. But I concede this point, and proceed to the more immediate object of my animadversions. The remark may be thought preposterous, should I observe, that to a chaste and delicate young mind, there is in *good plays* one danger which I will venture to assert is almost more formidable than that which is often attached to pieces more obviously censurable. The more refined and delicate the passion of love is made to appear, the more insinuating, and of course the more dangerous will the exquisite and reiterated representation of that passion be found. Now love being the grand business of plays, those young ladies who are frequently attending them, will be liable to nourish a feeling which is often strong enough of itself without this constant supply of foreign fuel, namely, that love is the grand business of life also. If the passion be avowedly illicit, her well-instructed conscience will arm her with scruples, and her sense of decorum will set her on her guard. While on the other hand, the greater the purity with which the passion is exhibited, provided the exhibition be very touching and warm, the more deep and irresistible will be its effect on a tender and inexperienced heart; nay, the more likely will the passion acted on the stage be to excite a corresponding passion in the heart of the young spectatress. If she have not yet felt the passion she sees so finely portrayed, she will wish to feel it, and the not having felt it she will consider as something wanting to the perfection of her nature. She will ascribe the absence of it to a defect in her own heart which must be supplied, or to some untowardness in her own circumstances which must be removed. Thus her imagination will do the work of the passions, and the fancy will anticipate the feelings of the heart: the source this of some of the most fatal disorders in the female character!

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Now to captivate such a tender and affectionate heart as that we are considering, the semblance of virtue is necessary; for while she will conceive of criminal passion as censurable, she will be equally apt to consider even the most imprudent passion as justifiable, so long as the idea of absolute crime is kept at a distance. If the love be represented as avowedly vicious, instead of lending herself to the illusion she will allow it ought to be sacrificed to duty; but if she thinks it innocent, she persuades herself that every duty should be sacrificed to *it*. Nay, she will value herself in proportion as she thinks she could imitate the heroine who is able to love with so much violence and so much purity at the same time.—By frequent repetition, especially if there be a taste for romance and poetry in the innocent young mind, the feelings are easily transplanted from the theatre to the closet; they are made to become a standard of action, and are brought home as the regulators of life and manners. The heart being thus filled with the pleasures of love, a new æra takes place in her mind, and she carries about with her an aptitude to receive any impression herself, and a constantly waking and active desire to make this impression in return. The plain and sober duties of life begin to be uninteresting; she wishes them to be diversified with events and enlivened by heroes.—Though she retains her virtue, her sober-mindedness is impaired; for she longs to be realizing those pains and pleasures, and to be acting over those scenes and sacrifices which she so often sees represented. If the evils arising from frequent scenic representations to a young woman were limited to this single inconvenience, that it makes her sigh to be a heroine, it would be a strong reason why a discreet and pious mother should be slow in introducing her to them.

I purposely forbear in this place repeating any of those higher arguments drawn from the utter irreconci-

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lableness of this indulgence of the fancy, of this gratification of the senses, this unbounded roving of the thoughts, with the divine injunction of bringing "every thought into the obedience of Christ."

But it will be said perhaps all this rigour may be very suitable to enthusiasts and fanatics, to the vulgar, the retired, and the obscure: but would you exclude the more liberal and polished part of society from the delight and instruction which may be derived from the great masters of the human heart, from Shakspeare particularly?

On this subject I think myself called upon to offer my opinion (such as it is) as unreservedly as I have taken the liberty of doing on the points considered in the former part of this preface. I think then, that there is a substantial difference between seeing and reading a dramatic composition; and that the objections which lie so strongly against the one, are not, at least in the same degree, applicable to the other. Or rather, while there is an essential and inseparable danger attendant on dramatic exhibitions, let the matter of the drama be ever so innocent, the danger in *reading* a play arises solely from the improper *sentiments* contained in it.

To read a moral play is little different from reading any other innocent poem; the dialogue form being a mere accident, and no way affecting the moral tendency of the piece. Nay, some excellent poets have chosen that form on account of its peculiar advantages, even when the nature of their subjects precluded the idea of theatrical exhibition. Thus Buchanan wrote his fine tragedies of *the Baptist* and *Jephthah*, Grotius that of *Christ suffering*, and Milton that of *Samson Agonistes;* not to name the *Joseph*, the *Bethulia delivered*, and some other pieces of the amiable Metastasio. Nothing therefore could be more unreasonable than to proscribe from the study or the closet well selected dramatic poetry. It may be

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read with safety, because it can there be read with soberness. The most animated speeches subside into comparative tameness, and provided they are perfectly pure, produce no ruffle of the passions, no agitation of the senses, but merely afford a pleasant, and it may be, a not unsalutary exercise to the imagination.

In all the different kinds of poetry there will be a necessity for selection; and where could safer poetical amusement be found than in the works of Racine, whose Athalia in particular (as we have had occasion elsewhere to observe) most happily illustrates an interesting piece of Scripture history, at the same time that, considered as a composition, it is itself a model of poetical perfection. I may mention, as an exquisite piece, the Masque of Comus, and as interesting poems in the dramatic form also, the Caractacus and Elfrida of Mason; the passing over which pieces in the volumes of that virtuous poet, merely because they are in a dramatic form, would be an instance of scrupulosity which one might venture to say no well-informed conscience could suggest.

Let neither then the devout and scrupulous on the one hand, nor the captious caviller on the other, object to this distinction; I mean between *reading* a dramatic composition, and *seeing* a theatrical exhibition, as if it were fanciful or arbitrary. In the latter is it the mere repetition of the speeches which implies danger? is it this which attracts the audience? No:—were even the best reader, if he did not bring in aid the novelty of a foreign language, to read the whole play himself without scenic decorations, without dress, without gesticulation, would such an exhibition be numerously, or for any length of time, attended? What then chiefly draws the multitude? It is the semblance of real action which is given to the piece by different persons supporting the different parts, and by their dress, their tones, their gestures heightening the representation into a kind of enchantment. It is

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the concomitant pageantry, it is the splendour of the spectacle, and even the show of the spectators:—these are the circumstances which altogether fill the theatre—which altogether produce the effect—which altogether create the danger. These give a pernicious force to sentiments which, when read, merely explain the mysterious action of the human heart, but which when thus uttered, thus accompanied, become contagious and destructive. These, in short, make up a scene of temptation and seduction, of over-wrought voluptuousness, and unnerving pleasure, which surely ill accords with "working out our salvation with fear and trembling," or with that frame of mind which implies that "the world is crucified to us, and we to the world."

I trust I have sufficiently guarded against the charge of inconsistency, even though I venture to hazard an opinion that in company with a judicious friend or parent, many scenes of Shakspeare may be read not only without danger, but with improvement. Far be it from me to wish to abridge the innocent delights of life where they may be enjoyed with benefit to the understanding, and without injury to the principles. Women especially, whose walk in life is so circumscribed, and whose avenues of information are so few, may, I conceive, learn to know the world with less danger, and to study human nature with more advantage, from the *perusal* of selected parts of this incomparable genius, than from most other attainable sources. I would, in this view, consider Shakspeare as a philosopher as well as poet, and I have been surprised to hear many pious people universally confound and reprobate this poet with the common herd of dramatists and novelists. To his acute and sagacious mind every varied position of the human heart; every shade of discrimination in the human character, all the minuter delicacies, all the exquisite touches, all the distinct affections, all the contending interests, all

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the complicated passions of the heart of man seem, as far as is allowed to human inspection to discern them, to be laid open. Though destitute himself of the aids of literature and of the polish of society, he seems to have possessed by intuition all the advantages that various learning and elegant society can bestow; and to have combined the warmest energies of passion and the boldest strokes of imagination with the justest proprieties of reasoning and the exactest niceties of conduct. He makes every description a picture, and every sentiment an axiom. He seems to have known how every being which *did* exist would speak and act under every supposed circumstance and every possible situation; and how every being which did *not* exist must speak and act if ever he were to be called into actual existence.

From the discriminated, the guarded, the qualified perusal of such an author, it will be impossible, nor does it appear to be necessary to debar accomplished and elegantly educated young persons. Let not the above eulogium be censured as too strong or too bold. In almost every library they will find his writings; in almost every work of taste and criticism the young reader will not fail to meet with the panegyric of Shakspeare. The frequent allusions to him, and the beautiful quotations from him, will, if they light upon a corresponding taste, inflame it with the curiosity to peruse all his works. Now, would it not be safer to anticipate the danger which might result from a private and unqualified perusal, for the parent to select such pieces as have in them the fewest of those coruptions which truth must allow that Shakspeare possesses in common with other dramatic poets? For who will deny that all the excellencies we have ascribed to him are debased by passages of offensive grossness? are tarnished with indelicacy, false taste, and vulgarity? This is not the place for a discussion of those faults too obvious to be overlooked, too

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numerous to be detailed, too strong to be palliated. Let me, however, be permitted to observe, that though Shakspeare often disgusts by single passages and expressions (which I will not vindicate by ascribing them to the false taste of the age in which he wrote; for though that may extenuate the fault of the poet, it does not diminish the danger of the reader) yet perhaps the general tendency of his pieces is less corrupt than that of the pieces of almost any dramatist; and the reader rises from the perusal of Shakspeare without those distinct images of evil on his mind, without having his heart so dissolved by amatory scenes, or his mind so warped by corrupt reasoning, or his heart so inflamed with seducing principles, as he will have experienced from other writers of the same description, however exempt *their* works may be from the more broad and censurable vices of composition which disfigure many parts of Shakspeare. Lest I be misrepresented, let it be observed, that I am now distinguishing the general *result* arising from the *tendency* of his pieces, from the effect of particular passages; and this is the reason why a discriminated perusal is so important. For after all, the *general disposition of mind* with which we rise from the reading of a work, is the best criterion of its utility or mischief. To the tragedies of Shakspeare too belongs this superiority, that his pieces being faithful histories of the human heart, and portraits of the human character, love is only introduced as one passion among many which enslave mankind; whereas by most other play-writers, it is treated as the monopolizing tyrant of the heart.

It is not because I consider Shakspeare as a correct moralist and an unerring guide, that I suggest the advantage of having the youthful curiosity allayed by a partial perusal, and under prudent inspection; but it is for this very different reason, lest by having that curiosity stimulated by the incessant commendation of this author,

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with which both books and conversation abound, young persons should be excited to devour in secret an author who, if devoured in the gross, will not fail, by many detached passages, to put a delicate reader in the situation of his own ancient Pistol when eating the leek; that is, to swallow and execrate at the same time.

But to conclude—which I will do with a recapitulation of the principal objects already touched upon. That I may not be misunderstood, let me repeat that this preface is not addressed to the gay and dissolute; to such as profess themselves to be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;"—but it is addressed to the more sober-minded; to those who believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who wish to be enlightened by its doctrines, to be governed by its precepts, and who profess to be "seeking a better country, even an heavenly one." The question then which we have been asking is, whether the stage, in its present state, be a proper amusement for such a character? What it would be, if perfectly reformed, and cast into the Christian mould, we have considered as another question, which it will be time enough to answer when the reformation itself takes place.

Neither (as has been observed) is it to the present purpose to insist that theatrical amusements are the most *rational;* for the question we have undertaken to agitate is, whether they are *blameless?* In this view the circumstance of going but *seldom* cannot satisfy a conscientious mind: for if the amusement be *right* we may partake of it with moderation, as of other lawful pleasures; if *wrong*, we should *never* partake of it.

Some individuals may urge that the amusements of the theatre never had the bad effects on their minds which they are said to have on the minds of others; but supposing this to be really the case (which however may admit of doubt) ought not such persons to reflect that by their presence, they sanction that which is obvi-

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ously hurtful to others, and which must, if so, be displeasing to God?

The stage is by universal concurrence allowed to be no *indifferent* thing. The impressions it makes on the mind are deep and strong; deeper and stronger perhaps than are made by any other amusement. If then such impressions be in the general hostile to Christianity, the whole resolves itself into this short question——Should a Christian frequent it?

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PERCY:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

As it was acted at the Theatre Royal Drury-Lane

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TO

EARL PERCY:

THIS TRAGEDY,

AS

A SMALL TRIBUTE

TO HIS ILLUSTRIOUS CHARACTER,

IS

VERY RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST OBEDIENT AND

MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The French drama, founded on the famous old story of Raoul de Coucy, suggested to the author many circumstances in this tragedy.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PERCY, earl of Northumberland.
Earl DOUGLAS.
Earl RABY, ELWINA's father.
EDRIC, friend to DOUGLAS.
HARCOURT, friend to PERCY.
Sir HUBERT, a knight.
ELWINA.
BIRTHA.

Knights, guards, attendants, &c.

Scene—Raby Castle in Durham.

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PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK.

SPOKEN BY MRS. BULKELY.

Though I'm a female, and the rule is ever,
For us, in epilogue, to beg your favour,
Yet now I take the lead—and, leaving art
And envy to the men—with a warm heart,
A woman here I come—to take a woman's part.
No little jealousies my mind perplex,
I come, the friend and champion of my sex;
I'll prove, ye fair! that, let us have our swing,
We can, as well as men, do any thing;
Nay, better too, perhaps—for now and then,
These times produce some bungling among men.
In spite of lordly wits—with force and ease,
Can't we write plays, or crush 'em, if we please?
The men, who grant not much, allow us charms—
Are eyes, shapes, dimples, then, our only arms?
To rule this man our sex dame Nature teaches;
Mount the high horse we can, and make long speeches.
Did not a lady knight, late chevalier,
A brave, smart soldier to your eyes appear?
Hey! presto! pass! his sword becomes a fan,
A comely woman rising from the man.
The French their Amazonian maid invite—
She goes—alike well skill'd to talk or write,
Dance, ride, negociate, scold, coquet, or fight.
If she should set her heart upon a rover,
And he prove false, she'd kick her faithless lover.

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The Greeks and Romans own our boundless claim—
The Muses, Graces, Virtues, Fortune, Fame,
Wisdom and Nature too, they women call;
With this sweet flatt'ry—yet they mix some gall—
'Twill out—the Furies too are females all.
The pow'rs of Riches, Physic, War, and Wine,
Sleep, Death, and Devils too—are masculine.
Are we unfit to rule?—a poor suggestion!
Austria and Russia answer well that question.
If joy from sense and matchless grace arise,
With your own treasure, Britons! bless your eyes.
If such there are—sure, in an humbler way,
The sex, without much guilt, may write a play:
That they've done nobler things, there's no denial;
With all your judgment, then, prepare for trial—
Summon your critic pow'rs, your manhood summon,
A brave man will protect, not hurt, a woman;
Let us wish modestly to share with men,
If not the force, the feather of the pen.

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PERCY.

ACT I.

Scene—A Gothic hall.

Enter EDRIC *and* BIRTHA.

Birtha. WHAT may this mean? Earl Douglas has enjoin'd thee
To meet him here in private?
Edric. Yes, my sister!
And this injunction have I oft receiv'd;
But when he comes, true to th' appointed hour,
He starts, looks wild, then drops ambiguous hints,
Frowns, hesitates, turns pale, and says 'twas nothing;
Then feigns to smile, and by his anxious care
To prove himself at ease, betrays his pain.
Birtha. Since my short sojourn here, I've mark'd this earl.
And though the ties of blood unite us closely,
I shudder at his haughtiness of temper,
Which not his gentle wife, the bright Elwina,
Can charm to rest. Ill are their spirits pair'd;
His heart's the seat of frenzy, her's of softness;
His love is transport, hers is trembling duty;
Rage in his soul is as the whirlwind fierce,
While hers ne'er felt the power of that rude passion.
Edric. Perhaps the mighty soul of Douglas mourns,
Because inglorious love detains him here,

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While our bold knights, beneath the Christian standard,
Press to the bulwarks of Jerusalem.

Birtha. Though every various charm adorns Elwina,
And though the noble Douglas doats to madness,
Yet some dark mystery involves their fate:
The canker grief devours Elwina's bloom,
And on her brow meek Resignation sits,
Hopeless, yet uncomplaining.

Edric. 'Tis most strange.

Birtha. Once, not long since, she thought herself alone;
'Twas then the pent-up anguish burst its bounds;
With broken voice, clasp'd hands, and streaming eyes,
She call'd upon her father, call'd him cruel,
And said her duty claim'd far other recompense.

Edric. Perhaps the absence of the good lord Raby,
Who, at her nuptials, quitting this fair castle,
Resign'd it to Elwina, thus afflicts her.
Hast thou e'er question'd her, good Birtha?

Birtha. Often;
But hitherto in vain, and yet she shows me
Th' endearing kindness of a sister's love;
But if I speak of Douglas——

Edric. See! he comes.
It would offend him should he find you here.

Enter DOUGLAS.

Doug. How! Edric and his sister in close conference?
Do they not seem alarm'd at my approach?
And see, how suddenly they part! Now, Edric,

[*Exit* BIRTHA.

Was this well done? or was it like a friend,
When I desir'd to meet thee here alone,
With all the warmth of trusting confidence,
To lay my bosom naked to thy view,
And show thee all its weakness; was it well
To call thy sister here, to let her witness
Thy friend's infirmity?—perhaps to tell her——

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Edric. My lord, I could not tell; I nothing know.

Doug. Nay, then, thou dost suspect there's something wrong!

Edric. If we were bred from infancy together,
If I partook in all thy youthful griefs,
And every joy thou knew'st was doubly mine;
Then tell me all the secret of thy soul.
Or have these few short months of separation,
The only absence we have ever known,
Have these so rent the bands of love asunder,
That Douglas should distrust his Edric's truth?

Doug. My friend, I know thee faithful as thou'rt brave,
And I will trust thee—but not now, good Edric;
'Tis past, 'tis gone, it is not worth the telling;
'Twas wrong to cherish what disturb'd my peace;
I'll think of it no more.

Edric. O most wise promise!
I fear'd some hidden trouble vex'd your quiet.
In secret I have watch'd——

Doug. Ha! watch'd in secret?
A spy? employ'd, perhaps, to note my actions?
What have I said? Forgive me, thou art noble:
Yet do not press me to disclose my grief,
For when thou know'st it, I perhaps shall hate thee
As much, my Edric, as I hate myself
For my suspicions; I am ill at ease.

Edric. How will the fair Elwina grieve to hear it!

Doug. She grieve? Elwina grieve? thou'st touch'd the string
That wakes me into madness. Hear me, then,
But let the deadly secret be secur'd
With bars of adamant in thy close breast.
Think of the curse which waits on broken oaths;
A knight is bound by more than vulgar ties,
And perjury in thee were doubly damn'd:
Well then, our gallant king——

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Edric. Is soon expected
From distant Palestine.

Doug. Forbid it, heaven!
For with him comes——

Edric. Ah! who?

Doug. Peace, peace,
For see, Elwina's here. Retire, my Edric;
When next we meet thou shalt know all. Farewell.

[*Exit* EDRIC.

Now to conceal with care my bosom's anguish,
And let her beauty chase away my sorrows!
Yes, I would meet her with a face of smiles—
But 'twill not be.

Enter ELWINA.

Elw. Alas, 'tis ever thus!
Thus ever clouded is his gloomy brow. [*aside.*

Doug. I were too blest, Elwina, could I hope
You met me here by choice, or that your bosom
Shar'd the warm transports mine must ever feel
At your approach.

Elw. My lord, if I intrude,
The cause which brings me claims your gentle pardon.
I fear you are not well, and come, unbidden,
Except by faithful duty, to inquire,
If hap'ly in my power, my little power,
I have the means to minister relief
To your afflictions?

Doug. What unwonted goodness!
O I were blest above the lot of man,
If tenderness, not duty, brought Elwina;
Cold, ceremonious, hard, unfeeling duty,
That wretched substitute for love; but know,
The heart demands a heart; nor will be paid
With less than what it gives. E'en now, Elwina,
The glistening tear stands trembling in your eyes,
Which cast their mournful sweetness on the ground,

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As if they fear'd to raise their beams to mine,
And read the language of reproachful love.

Elw. My lord, I hop'd the thousand daily proofs
Of my obedience——

Doug. Death to all my hopes!
Heart-rending word! obedience! what's obedience?
'Tis fear, 'tis hate, 'tis terror, 'tis aversion;
'Tis the cold debt of ostentatious duty,
Paid with insulting caution; paid to tell me
How much you tremble to offend a tyrant
So terrible as Douglas.—O, Elwina——
While duty portions out the debt it owes,
With scrupulous precision, and nice justice,
Love never measures, but profusely gives,
Gives, like a thoughtless prodigal, its all,
And trembles then, lest it has done to little.

Elw. I'm most unhappy that my cares offend.

Doug. True tenderness is less solicitous,
Less prudent and more fond; the enamour'd heart
Conscious it loves, and blest in being lov'd,
Reposes on the object it adores,
And trusts the passion it inspires and feels.—
Thou hast not learnt how terrible it is
To feed a hopeless flame.—But hear, Elwina,
Thou most obdurate, hear me.

Elw. Say, my lord,
For your own lips shall vindicate my fame,
Since at the altar I became your wife,
Can malice charge me with an act, a word,
I ought to blush at? Have I not still liv'd
As open to the eye of observation,
As fearless innocence should ever live?
I call attesting angels to be witness,
If in my open deed, or secret thought,
My conduct, or my heart, they've ought discern'd
Which did not emulate their purity.

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Doug. This vindication e'er you were accus'd,
This warm defence, this warding off attacks
E'er they are made, and construing casual words
To formal accusations, trust me, madam,
Shows rather an alarm'd and vigilant spirit,
Forever on the watch to guard its secret,
Than the sweet calm of fearless innocence.
Who talk'd of guilt? Who testified suspicion?

Elw. Learn, sir, that virtue, while 'tis free from blame,
Is modest, lowly, meek, and unassuming;
Not apt, like fearful vice, to shield its weakness,
Behind the studied pomp of boastful phrase,
Which swells to hide the poverty it shelters;
But when this virtue feels itself suspected,
Insulted, set at nought, its whiteness stain'd,
It then grows proud, forgets its humble worth,
And rates itself above its real value.

Doug. I did not mean to chide! But think, O think,
What pangs must rend this fearful, doating heart,
To see you sink as if in love with death,
To fear, distracting thought, to feel you hate me!

Elw. What if the slender thread by which I hold
This poor precarious being soon must break;
Is it Elwina's crime, or heaven's decree?
Yet I shall meet, I trust, the king of terrors,
Submissive and resign'd, without one pang,
One fond regret at leaving this gay world.

Doug. Yes, madam, there is one, one man ador'd,
For whom your sighs will heave, your tears will flow,
For whom this hated world will still be dear,
For whom you still would live——

Elw. Hold, hold my lord,
What may this mean?

Doug. Ah! I have gone too far.
What have I said?——Your father, sure, your father,

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The good lord Raby may at least expect
One tender sigh.

Elw. Alas, my lord! I thought
The harmless incense of a daughter's sighs
Might rise to heaven, and not offend its ruler.

Doug. 'Tis true; yet Raby's self is less belov'd
Since he bestow'd his daughter's hand on Douglas:
That was a crime the dutiful Elwina
Can never pardon; and believe me, madam,
My love's so nice, so delicate my honour,
I am asham'd to owe my happiness
To ties which make you wretched.

[*Exit Douglas.*

Elw. Ah! how's this?
Though I have ever found him fierce and rash,
Full of obscure surmise and distant hints,
Till now he never ventur'd to accuse me.
"Yet there is one, one man belov'd, ador'd,
"For whom your tears will flow:"—these were his words—
And then the wretched subterfuge of Raby—
How poor th' evasion!—But my Birtha comes.

Enter BIRTHA.

Birtha. Crossing the portico I met lord Douglas,
Disorder'd were his looks, his eyes shot fire;
He call'd upon your name with such distraction,
I fear'd some sudden evil had befall'n you.

Elw. Not sudden; no; long has the storm been gathering,
Which threatens speedily to burst in ruin
On this devoted head.

Birtha. I ne'er beheld
Your gentle soul so ruffled, yet I've mark'd you,
While others thought you happiest of the happy,
Blest with whate'er the world calls great, or good,

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With all that nature, all that fortune gives,
I've mark'd you bending with a weight of sorrow.

Elw. O, I will tell thee all! thou could'st not find
An hour, a moment in Elwina's life,
When her full heart so long'd to ease its load,
And pour its sorrows in thy friendly bosom:
Hear, then, with pity hear my tale of wo.
And, O let filial piety forgive,
If my presumptuous lips arraign a father!
Yes, Birtha, that belov'd, that cruel father
Has doom'd me to a life of hopeless anguish,
Doom'd me to die e'er half my days are number'd,
Doom'd me to give my trembling hand to Douglas,
'Twas all I had to give, my heart was—Percy's.

Birtha. What do I hear?

Elw. My mis'ry, not my crime.
Long since the battle 'twixt the rival houses
Of Douglas and of Percy, for whose hate
The world itself 's too small a theatre;
One summer's morn my father chas'd the deer
On Cheviot hills, Northumbria's fair domain——

Birtha. On that fam'd spot where first the feuds commenc'd
Between the earls?

Elw. The same. During the chase,
Some of my father's knights receiv'd an insult
From the lord Percy's herdsmen, churlish foresters,
Unworthy of the gentle blood they serv'd.
My father, proud and jealous of his honour,
(Thou know'st the fiery temper of our barons)
Swore that Northumberland had been concern'd
In this rude outrage, nor would hear of peace
Or reconcilement which the Percy offer'd;
But bade me hate, renounce, and banish him.
O! 'twas a task too hard for all my duty;
I strove, and wept; I strove—but still I lov'd.

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Birtha. Indeed 'twas most unjust; but say what follow'd?

Elw. Why should I dwell on the disastrous tale?
Forbid to see me, Percy straitway join'd
The great crusade against the Saracen.
Soon as the jarring kingdoms were at peace,
Earl Douglas, whom till then I ne'er had seen,
Came to this castle; 'twas my hapless fate
To please him.—Birtha; thou can'st tell what follow'd:
But who shall tell the agonies I felt?
My barbarous father forc'd me to dissolve
The tender vows himself had bid me form——
He dragg'd me trembling, dying, to the altar,
I sigh'd, I struggl'd, fainted, and—complied.

Birtha. Did Douglas know a marriage had been once
Propos'd 'twixt you and Percy?

Elw. If he did,
He thought, like you, it was a match of policy,
Nor knew our love outran our father's prudence.

Birtha. Should he now find he was the instrument
Of the lord Raby's vengeance?

Elw. 'Twere most dreadful!
My father lock'd this motive in his breast,
And feign'd to have forgot the chace of Cheviot.
Some moons have now completed their slow course
Since my sad marriage.—Percy still is absent.

Birtha. Nor will return before his sov'reign comes.

Elw. Talk not of his return! this coward heart
Can know no thought of peace but in his absence.
How, Douglas here again? some fresh alarm!

Enter DOUGLAS, *agitated, with letters in his hand.*

Doug. Madam, your pardon——

Elw. What disturbs my lord?

Doug. Nothing.—Disturb? I ne'er was more at ease.
These letters from your father give us notice

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He will be here to-night—he further adds
The king's each hour expected to return.
The grand crusade's accomplish'd.

Elw. How! the king?
Said you the king?

Doug. And 'tis lord Raby's pleasure
That you, among the foremost, bid him welcome.
You must attend the court.

Elw. Must I, my lord?

Doug. Now to observe how she receives the news!
[*Aside.*

Elw. I must not—cannot.—By the tender love
You have so oft profess'd for poor Elwina,
Indulge this one request——O let me stay!

Doug. Enchanting sounds! she does not wish to go—
[*Aside.*

Elw. The bustling world, the pomp which waits on courts
Ill suits my humble, unambitious soul;
Then leave me here, to tread the safer path
Of private life, here, where my peaceful course
Shall be as silent as the shades around me;
Nor shall one vagrant wish be e'er allow'd
To stray beyond the bounds of Raby castle.

Doug. O music to my ears? (*aside.*) Can you resolve
To hide those wondrous beauties in the shade,
Which rival kings would cheaply buy with empire?
Can you renounce the pleasures of a court,
Whose roofs resound with minstrelsey and mirth?

Elw. My lord, retirement is a wife's best duty,
And virtue's safest station is retreat.

Doug. My soul's in transports! (*aside.*)—But can you forego
What wins the soul of woman—admiration?
Forego a world, where far inferior charms,
Only presume to shine when you are absent?

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Will you not long to meet the public gaze?
Long to eclipse the fair, and charm the brave?

Elw. These are delights in which the *mind* partakes not.

Doug. I'll try her farther. (*Aside.*)

(*Takes her hand, and looks steadfastly at her as he speaks.*)

But reflect once more;
When you shall hear that England's gallant peers,
Fresh from the fields of war, and gay with glory,
Elate with fame, and vain with victory;
When you shall hear these princely youths contend
In many a tournament for Beauty's prize;
When you shall hear of revelry, and masking,
Of mimic combats, and of festive halls,
Of lances shiver'd in the cause of love,
Will you not then repent, then wish your fate,
Your happier fate had till that hour reserv'd you
For some plum'd conqueror?

Elw. My fate, my lord,
Is now bound up with yours, nor do I wish
To gain another heart.

Doug. Here let me kneel——
Yes, I will kneel, and gaze, and weep, and wonder;
Thou paragon of goodness!—pardon, pardon!

[*Kisses her hand.*

I am convinc'd—I can no longer doubt,
Nor talk, nor hear, nor reason, nor reflect.
—I must retire, and give a loose to joy.

[*Exit* DOUGLAS.

Birtha. The king returns.

Elw. And with him Percy comes!

Birtha. You needs must go.

Elw. O never, never, Birtha,
That rock I'll shun. Shall I solicit ruin,

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And pull destruction on me ere its time?
I, who have held it criminal to name him!
I will not go—I disobey thee, Douglas,
But disobey thee to preserve thy honour.

ACT II.

Scene—the Hall.

Doug. (*speaking as he enters.*) See that the traitor insantly be seiz'd,
And strictly watch'd: let none have access to him.
O Jealousy, thou aggregate of woes!
Were there no hell, thy torments would create one.
But yet she may be guiltless—may? she must.
How beautiful she look'd! pernicious beauty!
Yet innocent, as warm, seem'd the sweet blush
That mantled on her cheek. But not for me,
But not for me those breathing roses blow!
And then she wept—what! can I bear her tears?
Well—let her weep—her tears are for another;
O did they fall for me, to dry their streams,
I'd drain the choicest blood that feeds this heart,
Nor think the drops I shed were half so precious.
[*He stands in a musing posture.*

Enter lord Raby.

Raby. Sure I mistake—Am I in Raby castle?
Impossible! that was the seat of smiles;
There Cheerfulness, and Joy, were household gods.
I us'd to scatter pleasures when I came,
And every servant shar'd his lord's delight.
But now Suspicion and Distrust preside,
And Discontent maintains a sullen sway.
Where is the smile unfeign'd, the jovial welcome,

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Which cheer'd the sad, beguil'd the pilgrim's pain,
And made dependency forget its bonds?
Where is the ancient, hospitable hall,
Whose vaulted roof once rung with harmless mirth,
Where every passing stranger was a guest,
And every guest a friend? I fear me much,
If once our nobles scorn their rural seats,
Their rural greatness, and their vassals' love,
Freedom, and English grandeur, are no more.

Doug. (*advancing.*) My lord, you are welcome.

Raby. Sir, I trust I am;
But yet, methinks, I shall not feel I'm welcome,
Till my Elwina bless me with her smiles:
She was not wont with ling'ring step to meet me,
Or greet my coming with a cold embrace;
Now I extend my longing arms in vain,
My child, my darling, does not come to fill them.
O they were happy days when she would fly
To meet me from the camp or from the chase,
And with her fondness overpay my toils!
How eager would her tender hands unbrace
The ponderous armour from my war-worn limbs,
And pluck the helmet which oppos'd her kiss!

Doug. O sweet delights that never must be mine!

Raby. What do I hear?

Doug. Nothing: inquire no farther.

Raby. My lord, if you respect an old man's peace;
If e'er you doated on my much-lov'd child,
As 'tis most sure you made me think you did;
Then, by the pangs which you may one day feel,
When you, like me, shall be a fond, fond father,
And tremble for the treasure of your age,
Explain what this alarming silence means?
You sigh, yet do not speak; nay more, you hear not?
Your lab'ring soul turns inward on itself,

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As there were nothing but your own sad thoughts
Deserv'd regard. Does my child live?

Doug. She does.

Raby. To bless her father!

Doug. And—to curse her husband!

Raby. Ah! have a care, my lord; I'm not so old—

Doug. Nor I so base that I should tamely bear it;
Nor am I so inur'd to infamy,
That I can say without a burning blush,
She lives to be my curse.

Raby. How's this?

Doug. I thought
The lily op'ning to the heav'n's soft dews,
Was not so fragrant, and was not so chaste.

Raby. Has she prov'd otherwise? I'll not believe it.
Who has traduc'd my sweet, my innocent child?
O she's too good to 'scape calumnious tongues.
Detraction ever loves a lofty mark:
It saw her soar a flight above her fellows,
And hurl'd its arrow to her glorious height,
To reach her heart, and bring her to the ground.

Doug. Had the rash tongue of Slander so presum'd,
My vengeance had not been of that slow sort
To need a prompter; nor should any arm,
No, not a father's, dare dispute with mine
The privilege to die in her defence.
None dares accuse Elwina, but——

Raby. But who?

Doug. But Douglas.

Raby (*putting his hand to his sword.*) You?—O spare my age's weakness!
You do not know what 'tis to be a father,
You do not know, or you would pity me,
The thousand tender throbs, the nameless feelings,
The dread to ask, and yet the wish to know,
When we adore and fear: but wherefore fear?
Does not the blood of Raby fill her veins?

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Doug. Percy!—know'st thou that name?

Raby. How! what of Percy?

Doug. He loves Elwina and, my curses on him,
He is belov'd again.

Raby. I'm on the rack!

Doug. Not the two Theban brothers bore each other
Such deep, such deadly hate as I and Percy.

Raby. But tell me of my child.

Doug. (*not minding him.*) As I and Percy!
When at the marriage rites, O rites accurs'd!
I seiz'd her trembling hand, she started back;
Cold horror thrill'd her veins, her tears flow'd fast.
Fool that I was, I thought 'twas maiden fear.
Dull, doating ignorance! beneath those terrors,
Hatred for me, and love for Percy lurk'd.

Raby. What proof of guilt is this?

Doug. E'er since our marriage
Our days have still been cold and joyless all;
Painful restraint, and hatred ill disguis'd,
Her sole return for all my waste of fondness.—
This very morn I told her 'twas your will
She should repair to court. With all those graces,
Which first subdu'd my soul, and still enslave it,
She begg'd to stay behind in Raby castle,
For courts and cities had no charms for her.
Curse my blind love! I was again ensnar'd,
And doated on the sweetness which deceiv'd me.
Just at the hour she thought I should be absent,
(For chance could ne'er have tim'd their guilt so well)
Arriv'd young Harcourt, one of Percy's knights,
Strictly enjoin'd to speak to none but her;
I seiz'd the miscreant; hitherto he's silent,
But tortures soon shall force him to confess.

Raby. Percy is absent—They have never met.

Doug. At what a feeble hold you grasp for succour?
Will it content me that her person's pure?

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No; if her alien heart doats on another,
She is unchaste, were not that other Percy.
Let vulgar spirits basely wait for proof,
She loves another—that's enough for Douglas.

Raby. Be patient.

Doug. Be a tame convenient husband!
And meanly wait for circumstantial guilt?
No—I am nice as the first Cæsar was,
And start at bare suspicion. (*Going.*)

Raby. (*holding him*) Douglas, hear me;
Thou hast nam'd a Roman husband, if she's false,
I mean to prove myself a Roman father.

[*Exit* DOUGLAS.

This marriage was my work, and thus I'm punish'd!

Enter ELWINA.

Elw. Where is my father? let me fly to meet him;
O let me clasp his venerable knees,
And die of joy in his belov'd embrace.

Raby. (*avoiding her embrace*) Elwina!

Elw. And is that all? so cold?

Raby. (*sternly*) Elwina!

Elw. Then I'm undone indeed! How stern his looks!
I will not be repuls'd, I am your child,
The child of that dear mother you ador'd;
You shall not throw me off; I will grow here,
And, like the patriarch, wrestle for a blessing.

Raby. (*holding her from him*) Before I take thee in these aged arms,
Press thee with transport to this beating heart,
And give a loose to all a parent's fondness,
Answer, and see thou answer me as truly
As if the dread inquiry came from Heav'n—
Does no interior sense of guilt confound thee?
Can'st thou lay all thy naked soul before me?
Can thy unconscious eye encounter mine?
Can'st thou endure the probe, and never shrink?
Can thy firm hand meet mine, and never tremble?

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Art thou prepar'd to meet the rigid judge?
Or to embrace the fond, the melting father?

Elw. Mysterious Heav'n! to what am I reserv'd?

Raby. Should some rash man, regardless of thy fame,
And in defiance of thy marriage vows,
Presume to plead a guilty passion for thee,
What would'st thou do?

Elw. What honour bids me do.

Raby. Come to my arms! (*they embrace.*)

Elw. My father!

Raby. Yes, Elwina,
Thou art my child—thy mother's perfect image.

Elw. Forgive these tears of mingled joy and doubt;
For why that question? who should seek to please
The desolate Elwina?

Raby. But if any
Should so presume, can'st thou resolve to hate him,
Whate'er his name, whate'er his pride of blood,
Whate'er his *former* arrogant pretensions?

Elwina. Ha!

Raby. Dost thou falter? Have a care, Elwina.

Elwina. Sir, do not fear me; am I not your daughter?

Raby. Thou hast a higher claim upon thy honour;
Thou art earl Douglas' wife.

Elwina. (*weeps.*) I am indeed!

Raby. Unhappy Douglas!

Elwina. Has he then complain'd?
Has he presum'd to sully my white fame?

Raby. He knows that Percy ——

Elwina. Was my destin'd husband;
By your own promise, by a father's word;
And by a tie more strong, more sacred still,
Mine, by the fast, firm bond of mutual love.

Raby. Now, by my fears, thy husband told me truth.

Elwina. If he has told thee that thy only child
Was forc'd, a helpless victim to the altar;

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Torn from his arms who had her virgin heart,
And forc'd to make false vows to one she hated,
Then, I confess, that he has told thee truth.

Raby. Her words are barbed arrows in my heart.
But 'tis too late (*aside.*) Thou hast appointed Harcourt
To see thee here by stealth in Douglas' absence.

Elwina. No, by my life! nor knew I till this moment
That Harcourt was return'd. Was it for this
I taught my heart to struggle with its wrongs?
Was it for this I bore my woes in silence?
When the fond ties of early love were broken,
Did my weak soul break out in fond complaints?
Did I reproach thee? Did I call thee cruel?
No—I endur'd it all; and weary'd heaven
To bless that father who destroy'd my peace.

Enter MESSENGER.

Mess. My lord, a knight, sir Hubert as I think,
But newly landed from the holy wars,
Intreats admittance.

Raby. Let the warrior enter.

[*Exit* MESSENGER.

All private interests sink at his approach;
Ye selfish cares, be for a moment banish'd!
I've now no child; my country claims me all.

Elwina. Weak heart, be still, for what hast thou to fear?

Enter SIR HUBERT.

Raby. Welcome, thou gallant knight! sir Hubert, welcome!
Welcome to Raby castle!—In one word,
Is the king safe? Is Palestine subdued?

Sir Hub. The king is safe, and Palestine subdued.

Raby. Blest be the god of armies! Now, sir Hubert,
By all the saints thou'rt a right noble knight!
O why was I too old for this crusade?

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I think it would have made me young again,
Could I, like thee, have seen the hated Crescent
Yield to the Christian cross.—How now, Elwina!
What! cold at news which might awake the dead!
If there's a drop in thy degenerate veins
That glows not now, thou art not Raby's daughter.
It is Religion's cause, the cause of Heaven!

Elwina. When Policy assumes Religion's name,
And wears the sanctimonious garb of faith,
Only to colour fraud and license murder,
War then is tenfold guilt.

Raby. Blaspheming girl!

Elwina. 'Tis not the crosier, nor the pontiff's robe,
Nor outward show, nor form of sanctity,
Nor Palestine destroy'd, nor Jordan's banks
Delug'd with blood of slaughter'd infidels,
No, nor th' extinction of the eastern world,
Nor all the wild, pernicious, bigot rage
Of mad crusades, can bribe that Pow'r, who sees
The motive with the act. O blind to think
Fanatic wars can please the Prince of Peace!
He who erects his altar in the heart,
Abhors the sacrifice of human blood,
And hates the false devotion of that zeal
Which massacres the world he died to save.

Raby. O impious rage! If thou would'st shun my curse
No more, I charge thee.——Tell me, good sir Hubert,
Say, have our arms achieved this glorious deed,
I fear to ask, without much Christian bloodshed?

Elwina. Now heaven support me! (*aside.*)

Sir Hub. My good lord of Raby,
Imperfect is the sum of human glory!
Would I could tell thee that the field was won
Without the death of such illustrious knights,
As makes the high flush'd cheek of Victory pale,

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Elwina. Why should I tremble thus? (*aside.*)

Raby. Whom have we lost?

Sir Hub. The noble Clifford, Walsingham, and Grey,
Sir Harry Hastings, and the valiant Pembroke.
All men of choicest note.

Raby. O that my name
Had been enroll'd in such a list of heroes!
If I was too infirm to serve my country,
I might have prov'd my love by dying for her.

Elwina. Were there no more?

Sir Hub. But few of noble blood,
But the brave youth who gain'd bright glory's palm;
The flower of knighthood, and the plume of war,
Who bore his banner foremost in the field,
Yet conquer'd more by mercy than the sword,
Was Percy.

Elwina. Then he lives! (*aside.*)

Raby. Did he? Did Percy?
O gallant youth, then I'm thy foe no more;
Who conquers for my country is my friend!
His fame shall add new glories to a house,
Where never maid was false, nor knight disloyal.

Sir Hub. You do embalm him, lady, with your tears:
They grace the grave of glory where he lies.
He died the death of honour.

Elwina. Said'st thou—died?

Sir Hub. Beneath the towers of Solyma he fell.

Elwina. Oh!

Sir Hub. Look to the lady.

(ELWINA *faints in her father's arms.*)

Raby. Gentle knight, retire——
'Tis an infirmity of nature in her.
She ever mourns at any tale of blood;
She will be well anon—mean time, sir Hubert,
You'll grace our castle with your friendly sojourn.

Sir Hub. I must return with speed—health to the lady!

[*Exit* HUBERT.

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Raby. Look up Elwina. Should her husband come!
Yet she revives not.

Enter DOUGLAS.

Doug. Ha!——Elwina fainting?
My lord, I fear you have too harshly chid her.
Her gentle nature could not brook your sternness.
She wakes, she stirs, she feels returning life.
My love! (*He takes her hand.*)

Elwina. O Percy!

Doug. (*starts.*) Do my senses fail me?

Elwina. My Percy, 'tis Elwina calls.

Doug. Hell, hell!

Raby. Retire awhile, my daughter.

Elwina. Douglas here?
My father and my husband!——O for pity.

[*Exit* ELWINA, *casting a look of anguish on both.*

Doug. Now, now confess she well deserves my vengeance!
Before my face to call upon my foe!

Raby. Upon a foe who has no power to hurt thee.
Earl Percy's slain.

Doug. I live again.—But hold—
Did she not weep? She did, and wept for Percy.
If she laments him, he's my rival still,
And not the grave can bury my resentment.
I can be jealous of the dead.

Raby. No more.
The truly brave are still the truly gen'rous;
Now, Douglas, is the time to prove thee both.
If it be true that she did once love Percy,
Thou hast no more to fear, since Percy's dead.
Release young Harcourt, let him see Elwina,
'Twill serve a double purpose, 'twill at once
Prove Percy's death, and thy unchang'd affection.
Be gentle to my child, and win her heart
By confidence and unreproaching love.

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Doug. By heaven thou counsel'st well: it shall be done.
Go, set him free, and let him have admittance
To my Elwina's presence.
Raby. Farewell, Douglas.
Show thou believ'st her faithful, and she'll prove so.
[*Exit* RABY.
Doug. Northumberland is dead—that thought is peace!
Her heart may yet be mine; transporting hope!
Percy was gentle, ev'n a foe avows it,
And I'll be milder than a summer's breeze.
Yes, thou most lovely, most ador'd of women!
I'll trace each virtue, copy every grace,
Of my bless'd rival, happier in his death
To be thus lov'd, than living to be scorn'd.

ACT III.

Scene—A Garden at Raby castle, with a bower.

Enter PERCY *and* SIR HUBERT.

Sir Hub. O PERCY! that thou liv'st and art return'd,
More joys my soul than all the mighty conquests
That sun beheld, which rose on Syria's ruin.
Percy. I've told thee, good Sir Hubert, by what wonder
I was preserv'd, though numbered with the slain.
Sir Hub. 'Twas strange indeed!
Percy 'Twas heaven's immediate work!
But let me now indulge a dearer joy,
Talk of a richer gift of Mercy's hand;
A gift so precious to my doating heart,
That life preserv'd is but a second blessing.
O Hubert, let my soul indulge its softness!
The hour, the spot is sacred to Elwina.
This was her fav'rite walk; I well remember,

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(For who forgets that loves as I have lov'd!)
'Twas in that very bower she gave this scarf,
Wrought by the hand of love; she bound it on,
And, smiling, cried, Whate'er befall us, Percy,
Be this the sacred pledge of faith between us.
I knelt, and swore, call'd every power to witness,
No time nor circumstance should force it from me!
But vow'd to lose my life and this together.
Here I repeat my vow.

Sir Hub. Is this the man
Beneath whose single arm an host was crush'd?
He at whose name the Saracen turn'd pale?
Who when he fell, made conqu'ring armies weep,
And mourn a victory they had bought so dear?
How has he chang'd the trumpet's martial note,
And all the stirring clangor of the war,
For the soft melting of the lover's lute!
Why are thine eyes still bent upon the bower?

Percy. O Hubert, Hubert! to a soul enamour'd
There is a sort of local sympathy,
Which, when we view the scenes of early passion,
Paints the bright image of the object lov'd,
In stronger colours than remoter scenes
Could ever paint it; realizes shadow;
Embodies vacancy; lends shape and being
To airy fantasy; substance to thought;
Fiction to truth, and breath and voice to words.
Dresses the object up in all its charms;
Talks to it nearer, frames its answers kinder,
And turns imagination into vision.

Sir Hub. I should not be believ'd in Percy's camp,
If I should tell them that their gallant leader,
The bold Northumberland, the British Mars,
Renouncing war, dissolv'd in amorous wishes,
Loiter'd in shades, and pin'd in rosy bowers,
To catch a transient glance of two bright eyes.

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Percy. Enough of conquest, and enough of war!
Ambition's cloy'd—the heart resumes its rights.
When England's king, and England's good requir'd,
This arm not idly the keen falchion bore.
Enough—for vaunting misbecomes a soldier.
I live, I am return'd—am near Elwina!
See'st thou those turrets? Yes, that castle holds her.
But wherefore tell thee this? for thou hast seen her.
How look'd, what said she? Did she hear the tale
Of my imagin'd death without emotion?

Sir Hub. Percy, thou hast seen the musk-rose newly blown
Disclose its bashful beauties to the sun;
When lo! a chilling storm at once descends,
Sweeps all its blushing glories to the dust,
Bows its fair head, and blasts its op'ning charms.
So droop'd the maid, beneath the cruel weight
Of my sad tale.

Percy. So tender, and so true!

Sir Hub. I left her fainting in her father's arms,
The dying flower yet hanging on the tree.
E'en Raby melted at the news I brought,
And envy'd thee thy glory.

Percy. Then I am blest!
His hate subdued, I've nothing more to fear.

Sir Hub. My embassy despatch'd I left the castle,
Nor spoke to any of lord Raby's household,
For fear the king should chide the tardiness
Of my return. My joy to find you living
You have already heard.

Percy. But where is Harcourt?
E'er this he should have seen her, told her all;
How I surviv'd, return'd—and how I love!
I tremble at the near approach of bliss,
And scarcely can sustain the joy which waits me.

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Sir Hub. Grant heaven the fair one prove but half so true!

Percy. O she is truth itself!

Sir Hub. She may be chang'd,
Spite of her tears, her fainting, and alarms.
I know the sex, know them as nature made 'em,
Not such as lovers wish and poets feign.

Percy. Away! nor doubt a virtue so consummate.
And yet I tremble. Why does terror shake
These firm-strung nerves? But 'twill be ever thus
When heav'n prepares us more than human bliss,
And gives us only human strength to bear it.

Sir Hub. What beam of brightness breaks thro' yonder gloom.

Percy. Hubert—she comes! By all my hopes she comes!
'Tis she—the blissful vision is Elwina!
But ah! what mean those tears?—For me she weeps!
O transport!—go.—I'll listen unobserv'd,——
And for a moment taste, in silent joy,
The banquet of a tear which falls for love.

[*Exit* SIR HUBERT.

(PERCY *goes into the bower.*)

Enter ELWINA.

Elwina. Shall I not weep? and have I then no cause?
If I could break th' eternal bands of death,
And wrench the sceptre from his iron grasp;
If I could bid the yawning sepulchre
Restore to life its long committed dust;
If I could teach the slaught'ring hand of war,
To give me back my dear, my murder'd Percy,
Then I indeed might once more cease to weep.

(PERCY *comes out of the bower.*)

Percy. Then cease, for Percy lives.

Elwina. Protect me, heav'n!

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Percy. O joy unspeakable! My life, my love!
End of my toils, and crown of all my cares!
Kind as consenting peace, as conquest bright,
Dearer than arms, and lovelier than renown!

Elwina. It is his voice—it is, it is my Percy!
And dost thou live?

Percy. I never liv'd till now.

Elwina. And did my sighs, and did my sorrows reach thee?
And art thou come at last to dry my tears?
How didst thou 'scape the fury of the foe?

Percy. Thy guardian genius hover'd o'er the field,
And turn'd the hostile spear from Percy's breast,
Lest thy fair image should be wounded there.
But Harcourt should have told thee all my fate,
How I surviv'd——

Elwina. Alas! I have not seen him.
Oh I have suffer'd much.

Percy. Of that no more;
For every minute of our future lives
Shall be so bless'd, that we will learn to wonder
How we could ever think we were unhappy.

Elwina. Percy, I cannot speak.

Percy. Those tears how eloquent!
I would not change this motionless, mute joy,
For the sweet strains of angels: I look down
With pity on the rest of human kind,
However great may be their fame of happiness,
And think their niggard fate has giv'n them nothing,
Not giving thee; or granting some small blessing,
Denies them my capacity to feel it.

Elwina. Alas! what mean you?

Percy. Can I speak my meaning?
'Tis of such magnitude that words would wrong it;
But surely my Elwina's faithful bosom,
Should beat in kind responses of delight,
And feel, but never question, what I mean.

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Elwina. Hold, hold, my heart, thou hast much more to suffer!

Percy. Let the slow form, and tedious ceremony
Wait on the splendid victims of ambition.
Love stays for none of these. Thy father's soften'd,
He will forget the fatal Cheviot chase;
Raby is brave, and I have serv'd my country;
I would not boast; it was for thee I conquer'd.
Then come, my love!

Elwina. O never, never, never.

Percy. Am I awake? Is that Elwina's voice?

Elwina. Percy, thou most ador'd—and most deceiv'd!
If ever fortitude sustain'd thy soul,
When vulgar minds have sunk beneath the stroke,
Let thy imperial spirit now support thee——
If thou can'st be so wond'rous merciful,
Do not, O do not curse me!—but thou wilt,
Thou must—for I have done a fearful deed,
A deed of wild despair, a deed of horror:
I am, I am——

Percy. Speak, say, what art thou?

Elwina. Married.

Percy. Oh!

Elwina. Percy, I think I begg'd thee not to curse me;
But now I do revoke the fond petition.
Speak! ease thy bursting soul: reproach, upbraid,
O'erwhelm me with thy wrongs—I'll bear it all.

Percy. Open, thou earth, and hide me from her sight!
Didst thou not bid me curse thee?

Elwina. Mercy! mercy!

Percy. And have I 'scap'd the Saracen's fell sword,
Only to perish by Elwina's guilt?
I would have bared my bosom to the foe,
I would have died, had I but known you wish'd it.

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Elwina. Percy, I lov'd thee most, when I most wrong'd thee:
Yes, by these tears I did.

Percy. Married! just heav'n!
Married! to whom? Yet wherefore should I know?
It cannot add fresh horrors to thy crime,
Or my destruction.

Elwina. Oh! 'twill add to both.
How shall I tell? Prepare for something dreadful.
Hast thou not heard of—Douglas?

Percy. Why 'tis well!
Thou Power Supreme! why waste thy wrath on me?
Why arm omnipotence to crush a worm?
I could have fall'n without this waste of ruin.
Married to Douglas! By my wrongs I like it;
'Tis perfidy complete, 'tis finish'd falsehood,
'Tis adding fresh perdition to the deed;
'Tis filling up the measure of offence
Till it run o'er with misery!

Elwina. Percy, oh!
It was my father's deed! he made his child
An instrument of vengeance on thy head.
He wept, and threaten'd, sooth'd me, and commanded.

Percy. And you complied, most duteously complied?

Elwina. I could withstand his fury; but his tears,
Ah, they undid me! Percy, dost thou know
The cruel tyranny of tenderness?
Hast thou e'er felt a father's warm embrace?
Hast thou e'er seen a father's flowing tears,
And known that thou coulds: wipe those tears away?
If thou hast felt, and hast resisted these,
Then thou may'st curse my weakness; but if not,
Thou canst not pity, for thou canst not judge.

Percy. Let me not hear the music of thy voice,
Or I shall love thee still: I shall forget
Thy fatal marriage, and my savage wrongs.

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Elwina. Dost thou not hate me, Percy?

Percy. Hate thee? Yes,
As dying martyrs hate the righteous cause
Of that blest Power for whom they bleed—I hate thee.

(*They look at each other in silent agony.*)

Enter HARCOURT.

Har. Forgive, my lord, your faithful knight—

Percy. Come, Harcourt,
Come, and behold the wretch who once was Percy.

Har. With grief I've learn'd the whole unhappy tale.
Earl Douglas, whose suspicion never sleeps——

Percy. What, is the tyrant jealous?

Elwina. Hear him, Percy.

Percy. I will command my rage.—Go on.

Har. Earl Douglas
Knew by my arms and my accoutrements,
That I belong'd to you; he question'd much,
And much he menac'd me, but both alike
In vain; he then arrested and confin'd me.

Percy. Arrest my knight? The Scot shall answer it.

Elwina. How came you now releas'd?

Har. Your noble father
Obtain'd my freedom, having learn'd from Hubert
The news of Percy's death. The good old lord,
Hearing the king's return, has left the castle
To do him homage. (*To Percy.*) Sir, you had best retire;
Your safety is endanger'd by your stay.
I fear should Douglas know———

Percy. Should Douglas know?
Why what new magic's in the name of Douglas,
That it should strike Northumberland with fear?
Go, seek the haughty Scot, and tell him—No—
Conduct me to his presence.

Elwina. Percy, hold;
Think not 'tis Douglas—'tis—

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Percy. I know it well——
Thou mean'st to tell me 'tis Elwina's husband;
Why that inflames me to superior madness.
This happy husband, this triumphant Douglas,
Shall not insult my misery with his bliss.
I'll blast the golden promise of his joys.
Conduct me to him—nay, I will have way—
Come, let us seek this husband.

Elwina. Percy, hear me.
When I was robb'd of all my peace of mind,
My cruel fortune left me still one blessing,
One solitary blessing, to console me;
It was my fame:—'Tis a rich jewel, Percy,
And I must keep it spotless and unsoil'd:
But thou would'st plunder what e'en Douglas spar'd,
And rob this single gem of all its brightness.

Percy. Go—thou was born to rule the fate of Percy.
Thou art my conqueror still.

Elwina. What noise is that?

(HARCOURT *goes to the side of the stage.*)

Percy. Why art thou thus alarm'd?

Elwina. Alas! I feel
The cowardice and terrors of the wicked,
Without their sense of guilt.

Har. My lord, 'tis Douglas.

Elwina. Fly, Percy, and forever!

Percy. Fly from Douglas?

Elwina. Then stay, barbarian, and at once destroy
My life and fame.

Percy. That thought is death. I go.
My honour to thy dearer honour yields.

Elwina. Yet, yet thou art not gone!

Percy. Farewell, farewell!

[*Exit Percy.*

Elwina. I dare not meet the searching eye of Douglas.
I must conceal my terrors.

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DOUGLAS *at the side with his sword drawn,* EDRIC *holds him.*

Doug. Give me way.

Edric. Thou shalt not enter.

Doug. (*struggling with* EDRIC.) If there were no hell,
It would defraud my vengeance of its edge,
And he should live.
(*Breaks from Edric and comes forward.*)
Curs'd chance! he is not here.

Elwina (*going.*) I dare not meet his fury.

Doug. See, she flies
With ev'ry mark of guilt.—Go, search the bow'r;
(*aside to Edric.*)
He shall not thus escape.—Madam, return (*aloud.*)
Now, honest Douglas, learn of her to feign (*aside.*)
Alone, Elwina? who just parted hence?
(*With affected composure.*)

Elwina. My lord, 'twas Harcourt; sure you must have met him.

Doug. O exquisite dissembler! No one else?

Elwina. My lord!

Doug. How I enjoy her criminal confusion!
You tremble, madam.

Elwina. Wherefore should I tremble?
By your permission Harcourt was admitted;
'Twas no mysterious, secret introduction.

Doug. And yet you seem alarm'd.—If Harcourt's presence
Thus agitates each nerve, makes ev'ry pulse
Thus wildly throb, and the warm tides of blood
Mount in quick rushing tumult to your cheek;
If friendship can excite such strong emotions,
What tremors had a lover's presence caus'd!

Elwina. Ungenerous man!

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Doug. I feast upon her terrors (*aside.*)
The story of his death was well contriv'd (*to her;*)
But it affects not me; I have a wife,
Compar'd with whom cold Dian was unchaste.
(*Takes her hand.*)
But mark me well—though it concerns not you—
If there's a sin more deeply black than others,
Distinguish'd from the list of common crimes,
A legion in itself, and doubly dear
To the dark prince of hell, it is—Hypocrisy.
(*Throws her from him, and exit.*)

Elwina. Yes, I will bear his fearful indignation!
Thou melting heart be firm as adamant;
Ye shatter'd nerves be strung with manly force,
That I may conquer all my sex's weakness,
And live as free from terror as from guilt.
Nor shall this bleeding bosom lodge one thought,
Cherish one wish, or harbour one desire,
That angels may not hear, and Douglas know.

ACT IV.

Scene—The hall.

Enter DOUGLAS, *his sword drawn and bloody in one hand, in the other a letter.* HARCOURT *wounded.*

Doug. TRAITOR, no more. This letter shows thy office.
Twice hast thou robb'd me of my dear revenge.
I took thee for thy leader—Thy base blood
Would stain the noble temper of my sword,
But as the pander to thy master's lust
Thou justly fall'st by a wrong'd husband's hand.

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Har. Thy wife is innocent.

Doug. Take him away.

Har. Percy, revenge my fall!

[*Guards bear* HARCOURT *in.*

Doug. Now for the letter!
He begs once more to see her—so 'tis plain
They have already met!—but to the rest——
(*Reads*) "In vain you wish me to restore the scarf,
Dear pledge of love, while I have life I'll wear it;
'Tis next my heart; no pow'r shall force it thence.
Whene'er you see it in another's hand
Conclude me dead."—My curses on them both!
How tamely I peruse my shame! But thus,
Thus let me tear the guilty characters
Which register my infamy: and thus,
Thus would I scatter to the winds of heav'n
The vile complotters of my foul dishonour.

[*Tears the letter in the utmost agitation.*

Enter EDRIC.

Edric. My lord——

Doug. (*in the utmost fury not seeing* EDRIC) The scarf?

Edric. Lord Douglas.

Doug. (*still not hearing him*) Yes, the scarf!
Percy, I thank thee for the glorious thought!
I'll cherish it; 'twill sweeten all my pangs,
And add a keener relish to revenge!

Edric. My lord!

Doug. How, Edric here?

Edric. What new distress?

Doug. Dost thou expect I should recount my shame?
Dwell on each circumstance of my disgrace,
And swell my infamy into a tale;
Till I become the scorn of every fool,
And branded as a weak, believing husband?
Rage will not let me.—But—my wife is false.

Edric. Art thou convinc'd?

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Doug. The chronicles of hell
Cannot produce a falser.—But what news
Of her curs'd paramour?

Edric. He has escaped.

Doug. Hast thou examin'd ev'ry avenue?
Each spot? the grove? the bower, her fav'rite haunt?

Edric. I've search'd them all.

Doug. He shall be yet pursu'd.
Set guards at ev'ry gate.—Let none depart
Or gain admittance here without my knowledge.

Edric. What can their purpose be?

Doug. Is it not clear?
Harcourt has rais'd his arm against my life.
He fail'd; the blow is now reserv'd for Percy;
Then with his sword, fresh reeking from my heart,
He'll revel with that wonton o'er my tomb;
Nor will he bring her aught she'll hold so dear,
As the curs'd hand with which he slew her husband.
But he shall die! I'll drown my rage in blood!
Yes! here I do devote the forfeit blood
Of him my soul abhors, a rich libation
On thy infernal altar, black Revenge! [*Exeunt.*

Scene changes to the garden.

Enter ELWINA.

Elw. Each avenue is so beset with guards,
And lynx-ey'd Jealousy so broad awake,
He cannot pass unseen. Protect him, heav'n?

Enter BIRTHA.

My Birtha, is he safe? Has he escap'd?

Birtha. I know not. I despatch'd young Harcourt strait,
To bid him quit the castle, as you order'd,
Restore the scarf, and never see you more.
But how the hard injunction was receiv'd,
Or what has happen'd since, I'm yet to learn.

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Elw. O when shall I be eas'd of all my cares,
And in the quiet bosom of the grave
Lay down this weary head?—I'm sick at heart!
Should Douglas intercept his flight!

Birtha. Be calm;
Douglas this very moment left the castle
With seeming peace.

Elw. Ah, then indeed there's danger!
Birtha, whene'er suspicion feigns to sleep,
'Tis but to make its careless prey secure.

Birtha. Should Percy once again entreat to see thee,
'Twere best admit him; from thy lips alone
He will submit to hear his final doom
Of everlasting exile.

Elw. Birtha, no:
If honour would allow the wife of Douglas
To meet his rival, yet I durst not do it.
Percy! too much this rebel heart is thine:
Too deeply should I feel each pang I gave!
I cannot hate—but I will banish thee.
Inexorable duty, O forgive,
If I can do no more!

Birtha. If he remains,
As I suspect, within the castle walls,
'Twere best I sought him out.

Elw. Then tell him, Birtha,
But oh! with gentleness, with mercy tell him,
That we must never, never meet again.
The purport of thy tale must be severe,
Most strong and absolute the prohibition;
But let thy tenderness embalm the wound
My virtue gives. O soften his despair;
But say—we meet no more.

Enter PERCY.

Rash man, he's here!

[*She attempts to go, he seizes her hand.*

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Percy. I will be heard; nay, fly not! I will speak;
Lost as I am, I will not be denied
The mournful consolation to complain.

Elw. Percy, I charge thee, leave me.

Percy. Tyrant, no:
I blush at my obedience, blush to think
I left thee here alone, to brave the danger
I now return to share!

Elw. That danger's past:
Douglas was soon appeas'd: he nothing knows.
Then leave me, I conjure thee, nor again
Endanger my repose. Yet, e'er thou goest,
Restore the scarf.

Percy. Unkind Elwina, never;
'Tis all that's left me of my buried joys;
All which reminds me that I once was happy:
My letter told thee I would ne'er restore it.

Elw. Letter? what letter?

Percy. That I sent by Harcourt.

Elw. Which I have ne'er receiv'd. Douglas perhaps—
Who knows?

Birtha. Harcourt, t' elude his watchfulness,
Might prudently retire.

Elw. Grant heav'n, it prove so!

[ELWINA *going*, PERCY *holds her*.

Percy. Hear me, Elwina, the most savage honour
Forbids not that poor grace.

Elw. It bids me fly thee

Percy. Then e'er thou go'st, if we indeed must part,
To sooth the horrors of eternal exile,
Say but—thou pity'st me!

Elwina (*weeps.*) O Percy—pity thee!
Imperious honour!—surely I may pity him.
Yet, wherefore pity? no, I envy thee:
For thou hast still the liberty to weep;
In thee 'twill be no crime; thy tears are guiltless,

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For they infringe no duty, stain no honour,
And blot no vow: but mine are criminal,
Are drops of shame, which wash the cheek of Guilt,
And every tear I shed dishonours Douglas.

Percy. I swear my jealous love e'en grudges thine
Thy sad pre-eminence in wretchedness.

Elwina. Rouse, rouse, my slumb'ring virtue! Percy, hear me.
Heaven, when it gives such high-wrought souls as thine,
Still gives as great occasion to exert them.
If thou wast form'd so noble, brave, and gen'rous,
'Twas to surmount the passions which enslave
The gross of human kind.—'Tis their low boast
To yield to trials thou art call'd to conquer.
Criterion of great souls!—Then think, O think,
She, whom thou once did'st love, is now another's.

Percy Go on—and tell me that that other's Douglas.

Elwina. Whate'er his name, he claims respect from me:
His honour's in my keeping, and I hold
The trust so pure, its sanctity is hurt
E'en by thy presence.

Percy. Thou again hast conquer'd.
Celestial Virtue, like the angel-spirit,
Whose flaming sword defended Paradise,
Stands guard on ev'ry charm.—Elwina, yes,
To triumph over Douglas, we'll be virtuous.

Elwina. 'Tis not enough to be,—we must appear so:
High minds disdain the shadow of offence,
Nor must their whiteness wear the hue of guilt.

Percy. I shall retract—I dare not gaze upon thee;
My feeble virtue staggers, and again
The fiends of jealousy torment and haunt me.
They tear my heart-strings.——Oh!

Elwina. Percy! No more;
But spare my injur'd honour the affront
To vindicate itself.

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Percy. But love!

Elwina. But glory!

Percy. Enough! a ray of thy sublimer spirit
Has warm'd my dying honour to a flame!
One effort, and 'tis done. The world shall say,
When they shall speak of my disastrous love,
Percy deserv'd Elwina though he lost her.
Fond tears blind me not yet! a little longer,
Let my sad eyes a little longer gaze,
And leave their last beams here.

Elwina (*turns from him*) I do not weep.

Percy. Not weep! Then why those eyes avoiding mine?
And why that broken voice? those trembling accents?
That sigh which rends my soul?

Elwina. No more, no more.

Percy. That pang decides it. Come—I'll die at once;
Thou Pow'r Supreme! take all the length of days,
And all the blessings kept in store for me,
And add to her account.—Yet turn once more,
One little look, one last, short glimpse of day,
And then a long dark night.—Hold, hold, my heart,
O break not yet, while I behold her sweetness;
For after this dear, mournful, tender moment,
I shall have nothing more to do with life.

Elwina. I pray thee go?

Percy. 'Tis terrible to nature!
With pangs like these the soul and body part!
And thus, but oh! with far less agony,
The dying wretch still grasps to hold his being,
Thus clings to life, thus dreads the dark unknown,
Thus struggles to the last to keep his hold;
And when the last convulsive groan of death
Dislodges the sad spirit—thus it stays,
Thus fondly hovers o'er the form it lov'd.
Once, and no more—farewell, farewell!

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Elwina. For ever!

(*They look at each other for some time, then exit* PERCY.)

After a pause,

'Tis past—the conflict's past! retire, my Birtha,
I would address me to the throne of grace.

Birtha. May heaven restore that peace thy bosom wants! [*Exit* BIRTHA.

Elwina (*kneels.*) Look down, thou awful, heart-inspecting Judge,
Look down, with mercy, on thine erring creature,
And teach my soul the lowliness it needs!
That genuine penitence vouchsafe to give,
That inward purity of heart and life,
Which mourns the past offence, and shuns the future!
And if some sad remains of human weakness
Should sometimes mingle with my best resolves,
O breathe thy spirit on this wayward heart,
And teach me to reject th' intruding sin,
In its first birth of thought!

(*Noise without.*)

What noise is that?
The clash of swords! Should Douglas be return'd?

Enter DOUGLAS *and* PERCY *fighting.*

Doug. Yield, villain. yield.

Percy. Not till this good right arm
Shall fail its master.

Doug. This to thy heart then.

Percy. Defend thy own.

(*They fight.* PERCY *disarms* DOUGLAS.)

Doug. Confusion, death, and hell!

Edric (*without.*) This way I heard the noise.

(*Enter* EDRIC *and many knights and guards from every part of the stage.*)

Percy. Curs'd treachery!
But dearly will I sell my life.

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Doug. Seize on him.

Percy. I'm taken in the toils.

(PERCY *is surrounded by guards, who take his sword.*)

Doug. In the curs'd snare
Thou laid'st for me, traitor, thyself art caught.

Elwina. He never sought thy life.

Doug. Adultress, peace!
The villain Harcourt too—but he's at rest.

Percy. Douglas, I'm in thy pow'r; but do not triumph,
Percy's betray'd, not conquer'd. Come despatch me.

Elwina (*to Douglas.*) O do not, do not kill him!

Percy. Madam, forbear;
For by the glorious shades of my great fathers,
Their god-like spirit is not so extinct,
That I should owe my life to that vile Scot.
Though dangers close me round on every side,
And death besets me—I am Percy still.

Doug. Sorceress, I'll disappoint thee—he shall die;
Thy minion shall expire before thy face;
Yes, I will feast my hatred with your pangs;
And make his dying groans and thy fond tears
A banquet for my vengeance.

Elwina. Savage tyrant!
I would have fallen a silent sacrifice,
So thou had'st spar'd my fame: I never wrong'd thee.

Percy. She knew not of my coming; I alone
Have been to blame—spite of her interdiction,
I hither came. She's pure as spotless saints.

Elwina. I will not be excus'd by Percy's crime,
So white my innocence, it does not ask
The shade of others' faults to set it off;
Nor shall he need to sully his fair fame,
To throw a brigher lustre round my virtue.

Doug. Yet he can only die—but death for honour!
Ye pow'rs of hell, who take malignant joy
In human bloodshed, give me some dire means,
Wild as my hate and desperate as my wrongs!

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Percy. Enough of words.—Thou know'st I hate thee Douglas;
'Tis steadfast, fix'd, hereditary hate,
As thine for me; our fathers did bequeath it,
As part of our unalienable birthright,
Which nought but death can end.—Come, end it here.

Elwina (*kneels.*) Hold, Douglas, hold!—not for myself I kneel,
I do not plead for Percy, but for thee;
Arm not thy hand against thy future peace;
Spare thy brave breast the tortures of remorse—
Stain not a life of unpolluted honour,
For oh! as surely as thou strik'st at Percy,
Thou wilt forever stab the fame of Douglas.

Percy. Finish the bloody work.

Doug. Then take thy wish.

Percy. Why dost thou start?

(PERCY *bares his bosom;* DOUGLAS *advances to stab him, and discovers the scarf.*)

Doug. Her scarf upon his breast!
The blasting sight converts me into stone;
Withers my powers like cowardice or age;
Curdles the blood within my shiv'ring veins,
And palsies my bold arm.

Percy (*ironically to the knights.*) Hear you, his friends;
Bear witness to the glorious, great exploit,
Record it in the annals of his race;
That Douglas—the renown'd, the valiant Douglas,
Fenc'd round with guards, and safe in his own castle,
Surpris'd a knight unarm'd, and bravely slew him.

Doug. (*throwing away his dagger.*) 'Tis true—I am the very stain of knighthood.
How is my glory dim'd!

Elwina. It blazes brighter!
Douglas was only brave—he now is generous!

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Percy. This action has restor'd thee to thy rank,
And makes thee worthy to contend with Percy.

Doug. Thy joy will be as short as 'tis insulting!
(*To* ELWINA.)
And thou, imperious boy, restrain thy boasting,
Thou hast sav'd my honour, not remov'd my hate;
For my soul loaths thee for the obligation.
Give him his sword.

Percy. Now thou'rt a noble foe,
And in the field of honour I will meet thee,
As knight encount'ring knight.

Elwina. Stay, Percy, stay,
Strike at the wretched cause of all, strike here;
Here sheathe thy thirsty sword, but spare my husband.

Doug. Turn, madam, and address those vows to me,
To spare the precious life of him you love.
Ev'n now you triumph in the death of Douglas;
Now your loose fancy kindles at the thought,
And wildly rioting in lawless hope,
Indulges in th' adultery of the mind.
But I'll defeat that wish.—Guards, bear her in.
Nay, do not struggle. (*She is borne in.*)

Percy. Let our deaths suffice,
And rev'rence virtue in that form enshrin'd.

Doug. Provoke my rage no father. I have kindled
The burning torch of never-dying vengeance
At love's expiring lamp.—But mark me, friends,
If Percy's happier genius should prevail,
And I should fall, give him safe conduct hence;
Be all observance paid him.—Let him meet
Th' exactest courtesy which knighthood owes.
(*Aside to* EDRIC.)
Within I've something for thy private ear.

Percy. Now shall this mutual fury be appeas'd!
These eager hands shall soon be drench'd in slaughter!

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Yes—like two famish'd vultures snuffing blood,
And panting to destroy, we'll rush to combat;
Yet I've the deepest, deadliest cause of hate,
I am but Percy, thou'rt—Elwina's husband.

ACT V.

Scene—ELWINA's *apartment.*

Elwina. THOU who in judgment still remember'st mercy,
Look down upon my woes, preserve my husband.
Preserve my husband! Ah, I dare not ask it;
My very pray'rs may pull down ruin on me!
If Douglas should survive, what then becomes
Of—him—I dare not name? And if he conquers
I've slain my husband. Agonizing state,
When I can neither hope, nor think, nor pray,
But guilt involves me! Sure to know the worst
Were transport to the torture of suspence,
When each event is big with equal horror.
(*Looks out.*) What, no one yet! This solitude is dreadful!
My horrors multiply!

Enter BIRTHA.

Thou messenger of wo!

Bir. Of wo indeed!

Elw. How! is my husband dead?
Oh speak.

Bir. Your husband lives.

Elw. Then farewell Percy!
He was the tenderest, truest! Bless him heav'n,
With peace eternal, and a crown of glory!

Bir. Still are you wrong; the combat is not over.
Stay flowing tears, and give me leave to speak.

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Elw. Thou say'st that Percy and my husband live;
Then why this sorrow?

Bir. What a task is mine?

Elw. Thou talk'st as if I were a child in grief,
New to the knowledge of calamity.
Speak out; unfold thy tale, whate'er it be;
For I am so familiar with affliction,
It cannot come in any shape will shock me.

Bir. How shall I speak? Thy husband——

Elw. What of Douglas?

Bir. When all was ready for the fatal combat,
He call'd his chosen knights, then drew his sword,
And on it made them swear an awful oath,
Confirm'd by every rite religion bids,
That they would see perform'd his last request,
Be it whate'er it would.—Alas! they swore.

Elw. What did the dreadful preparation mean?

Bir. Then to their hands he gave a poison'd cup,
Compounded of the deadliest herbs and drugs;
"Take this," said he, "it is a husband's legacy;
Percy may conquer—and—I have a wife!
If Douglas falls, Elwina must not live."

Elw. Spirit of Herod! why, 'twas greatly thought!
'Twas worthy of the bosom which conceiv'd it?
Yet sure the project could not be his own;
For there was kindness—there was mercy in it.
Yes, Douglass! yes, my husband! I'll obey thee;
And bless thy bloody genius which devis'd
The deadly means to make obedience pleasant,
To reconcile thy vengeance with my peace.

Bir. O spare, for pity spare my bleeding heart;
Inhuman to the last. Unnatural! poison!

Elw. My gentle friend, what is there in a name?
The means are little, where the end is kind.
If it disturb thee, do not call it poison;
Call it the sweet oblivion of my cares,

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My balm of wo, my cordial of affliction.
The drop of mercy to thy fainting soul,
My kind dismission from a world of sorrow,
My cup of bliss, my passport to the skies.

Bir. Hark! what alarm is that?

Elw. The combat's over! (BIRTHA *goes out.*)
(ELWINA *stands in a fixed attitude, her hands clasped.*)
Now, gracious heav'n, sustain me in the trial,
And bow my spirit to thy just decrees!

Re-enter BIRTHA.

(ELWINA *looks steadfastly at her without speaking.*)

Bir. Douglass is fall'n.

Elw. Bring me the poison.

Bir. Never.

Elw. Where are the knights? I summon you—approach?
Draw near ye awful ministers of fate,
Dire instruments of posthumous revenge!
Come—I am ready; but your tardy justice
Defrauds the vengeance of the injur'd dead.
Go, see the castle be securely guarded——
Let ev'ry gate be barr'd—prevent his entrance.

Bir. Whose entrance?

Elw. His—the murderer of my husband.

Bir. He's single, we have hosts of friends.

Elw. No matter;
Who knows what love and madness may attempt?
But here I swear by all that binds the good,
Never to see him more.—Unhappy Douglas!
O if thy troubled spirit still is conscious
Of our past woes, look down and hear me swear,
That when the legacy thy rage bequeath'd me
Works at my heart, and conquers struggling nature,
E'en in that agony I'll still be faithful.
She who could never love, shall yet obey thee,
Weep thy hard fate, and die to prove her truth.

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Bir. O unexampled virtue! (*a noise without.*)
Elw. Heard you nothing?
By all my fears th' insulting conqueror comes.
O save me, shield me!

Enter DOUGLAS.

Heav'n and earth, my husband!

Doug. Yes——
To blast thee with the sight of him thou hat'st,
Of him thou hast wrong'd: adultress, 'tis thy husband.

Elw. (*kneels.*) Blest be the fountain of eternal mercy,
This load of guilt is spar'd me! Douglas lives!
Perhaps both live! (*To* BIRTHA.) Could I be sure of that,
The poison were superfluous, joy would kill me.

Doug. Be honest now for once, and curse thy stars;
Curse thy detested fate which brings thy husband:
Thy hated husband, when thy guilty soul
Revell'd in fond imaginary joys
With thy more happy paramour—just then,
When thy luxurious fancy had combin'd
Adulterous lust with murder—then, just then,
Thus to reverse the scene! polluted woman!
Mine is the transport now, and thine the pang.

Elw. Whence sprung the false report that thou had'st fall'n?

Doug. To give thy guilty breast a deeper wound,
To add a deadlier sting to disappointment,
I rais'd it—I contriv'd—I sent it thee.

Elw. Thou seest me bold, but bold in conscious virtue.
—That my sad soul may not be stain'd with blood,
That I may spend my few short hours in peace,
And die in holy hope of heav'n's forgiveness,
Relieve the terrors of my lab'ring breast,
Say I am clear of murder—say he lives,

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Say but that little word, that Percy lives;
And Alps and Oceans shall divide us ever,
As far as universal space can part us.

Doug. Canst thou renounce him?

Elw. Tell me that he lives,
And thou shalt be the ruler of my fate,
And life or death shall on thy bidding wait.
Yes, thou shalt hide me in a convent's gloom,
From cheerful daylight, and the haunts of men,
Where sad austerity and ceaseless pray'r
Shall share my uncomplaining day between them.

Doug. O hypocrite! now vengeance to thy office.
I had forgot—Percy commends him to thee,
And by my hand——

Elw. How—by thy hand?

Doug. Has sent thee
This precious pledge of love.

(*He gives her* PERCY's *scarf.*)

Elw. Then Percy's dead!

Doug. He is—O great revenge, thou now art mine!
See how convulsive sorrow rends her frame!
This, this is transport!—Injur'd honour, now,
Receives its vast, its ample retribution.
She sheds no tears, her grief's too highly wrought;
'Tis speechless agony.—She must not faint—
She shall not 'scape her portion of the pain.
No! she shall feel the fullness of distress,
And wake to keen perception of her wo.

Bir. Monster! Barbarian! leave her to her sorrows.

Elw. (*in a low broken voice.*) Douglas—think not I faint because thou see'st
The pale and bloodless cheek of wan despair.
Fail me not yet, my spirits; thou cold heart,
Cherish thy freezing current one short moment,
And bear thy mighty load a little longer.

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Doug. Percy, I must avow it, bravely fought,—
Died as a hero should;—but, as he fell,
Hear it, fond wanton! call'd upon thy name,
And his last guilty breath sigh'd out—Elwina!
Come—give a loose to rage, and feed my soul
With wild complaints and womanish upbraidings.

Elw. (*in a low solemn voice.*) No:
The sorrow's weak that wastes itself in words.
Mine is substantial anguish—deep, not loud.
I do not rave.——Resentment's the return
Of common souls for common injuries.
Light grief is proud of state, and courts compassion;
But there's a dignity in cureless sorrow;
A sullen grandeur which disdains complaint.
Rage is for little wrongs—Despair is dumb.

[*Exeunt* ELWINA *and* BIRTHA.

Doug. Why this is well!—her sense of wo is strong!
The sharp, keen tooth of gnawing grief devours her,—
Feeds on her heart, and pays me back my pangs.
Since I must perish, 'twill be glorious ruin:
I fall not singly, but, like some proud tower,
I'll crush surrounding objects in the wreck,
And make the devastation wide and dreadful.

Enter RABY.

Raby. O whither shall a wretched father turn?
Where fly for comfort?—Douglas, art thou here?
I do not ask for comfort at thy hands.
I'd but one little casket, where I lodg'd
My precious hoard of wealth, and, like an idiot,
I gave my treasure to another's keeping,
Who did not know the value of the gem;
But threw it, like a common thing, away,
And left the plunder'd owner quite a beggar.

Doug. What! art thou come to see thy race dishonour'd,
And thy bright sun of glory set in blood?

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I would have spar'd thy virtues and thy age
The knowledge of her infamy.

Raby. 'Tis false.
Had she been base, this sword had drank her blood.

Doug. Ha! dost thou vindicate the wanton?

Raby. Wanton!
Thou hast defam'd a noble lady's honour—
My spotless child——in me behold her champion:
The strength of Hercules will nerve this arm,
When lifted in defence of innocence.
The daughter's virtue for the father's shield,
Will make old Raby still invincible.

(*Offers to draw.*)

Doug. Forbear.

Raby. Thou dost disdain my feeble arm,
And scorn my age.

Doug. There will be blood enough;
Nor need thy wither'd veins, old lord, be drain'd,
To swell the copious stream.

Raby. Thou wilt not kill her?

Doug. Oh, 'tis a day of horror!

Enter EDRIC *and* BIRTHA.

Edric. Where is Douglas?
I come to save him from the deadliest crime
Revenge did ever mediate.

Doug. What mean'st thou?

Edric. This instant fly, and save thy guiltless wife.

Doug. Save that perfidious?——

Edric. That much injur'd woman.

Bir. Unfortunate indeed, but O most innocent!

Edric. In the last solemn article of death,
That truth-compelling state, when e'en bad men
Fear to speak falsely, Percy clear'd her fame.

Doug. I heard him.—'Twas the guilty fraud of love.
The scarf, the scarf! that proof of mutual passion
Giv'n but this day, to ratify their crimes!

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Bir. What means my lord? this day? that fatal scarf
Was giv'n long since, a toy of youthful friendship,
Long e'er your marriage, e'er you knew Elwina.

Raby. 'Tis I am guilty.

Doug. Ha!

Raby. I,—I alone.
Confusion, honour, pride, parental fondness
Distract my soul.—Percy was not to blame:
He was—the destin'd husband of Elwina!
He lov'd her—was belov'd,—and I approv'd.
The tale is long.——I chang'd my purpose since,
Forbad their marriage.

Doug. And confirm'd my mis'ry!
Twice did they meet to-day—my wife and Percy.

Raby. I know it.

Doug. Ha! thou knew'st of my dishonour!
Thou wast a witness, an approving witness,
At least a tame one!

Raby. Percy came, 'tis true,
A constant, tender, but a guiltless lover!

Doug. I shall grow mad indeed! a guiltless lover!
Percy, the guiltless lover of my wife!

Raby. He knew not she was married.

Doug. How! is't possible!

Raby. Douglas, 'tis true; both, both were ignorant:
He, of her marriage; she, of his return.

Bir. But now, when we believ'd thee dead, she vow'd
Never to see thy rival. Instantly,
Not in a start of momentary passion,
But with a martyr's dignity and calmness,
She bade me bring the poison.

Doug. Had'st thou done it,
Despair had been my portion! Fly, good Birtha,
Find out the suff'ring saint—describe my grief,

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And paint my vast extravagance of fondness.
Tell her I love as never mortal lov'd——
Tell her I know her virtues, and adore them;
Tell her I come but dare not seek her presence,
Till she pronounce my pardon.

Bir. I obey. [*Exit* BIRTHA.

Raby. My child is innocent! ye choirs of saints,
Catch the blest sounds—my child is innocent!

Doug. O, I will kneel, and sue for her forgiveness,
And thou shalt help me plead the cause of love;
And thou shalt weep—she cannot sure refuse
A kneeling husband and a weeping father.
Thy venerable cheek is wet already.

Raby. Douglas! it is the dew of grateful joy!
My child is innocent! I now would die,
Lest fortune should grow weary of her kindness,
And grudge me this short transport.

Doug. Where, where is she?
My fond impatience brooks not her delay;
Quick let me find her, hush her anxious soul,
And sooth her troubled spirit into peace.

Enter BIRTHA.

Bir. O horror, horror, horror!

Doug. Ah! what mean'st thou?

Bir. Elwina——

Doug. Speak——

Bir. Her grief wrought up to frenzy,
She has, in her delirium, drank the poison.

Raby. Frenzy and poison!

Doug. Both a husband's gift!
But thus I do her justice.

As DOUGLAS *goes to stab himself, enter* ELWINA *distracted, her hair dishevelled,* PERCY'S *scarf in her hand.*

Elwina (*goes up to Douglas.*) What, blood again
We cannot kill him twice:

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Soft, soft—no violence—he's dead already;——
I did it—Yes—I drown'd him with my tears;
But hide the cruel deed! I'll scratch him out
A shallow grave, and lay the green sod on it;
Ay—and I'll bind the wild briar o'er the turf,
And plant a willow there, a weeping willow——
(*She sits on the ground.*)
But look you tell not Douglas; he'll disturb him,
He'll pluck the willow up—and plant a thorn——
He will not let me sit upon his grave,
And sing all day, and weep, and pray all night.

Raby. Dost thou not know me?

Elwina. Yes——I do remember
You had a harmless lamb.

Raby. I had indeed!

Elwina. From all the flock you chose her out a mate,
In sooth a fair one—you did bid her love it—
But while the shepherd slept, the wolf devour'd it.

Raby. My heart will break. This is too much, too much.

Elwina (*smiling.*) O 'twas a cordial draught—I drank it all.

Raby. What means my child?

Doug. The poison—Oh the poison!
Thou dear wrong'd innocence——

Elwina. Off—murderer, off!
Do not defile me with those crimson hands.
(*Shows the scarf.*) This is his winding sheet—I'll wrap him in it—
I wrought it for my love—there—now I've drest him.
How brave he looks! my father will forgive him,
He dearly lov'd him once—but that is over!
See where he comes—beware, my gallant Percy!
Ah! come not here, this is the cave of death,
And there's the dark, dark palace of Revenge!
See, the pale king sits on his blood-stain'd throne!
He points to me—I come, I come, I come!

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(*She faints, they run to her;* DOUGLAS *takes up his sword, and stabs himself.*)

Doug. Thus, thus I follow thee.

Edric. Hold thy rash hand.

Doug. It is too late. No remedy but this
Could medicine a disease so desperate.

Raby. Ah! she revives!

Doug. (*raising himself.*) She lives! bear, bear me to her!
We shall be happy yet.

(*He struggles to get to her, but sinks down.*)

It will not be——
O for a last embrace——Alas I faint——
She lives——Now death is terrible indeed——
Fair Spirit, how I lov'd thee——O——Elwina! (*Dies.*)

Elwina. Where have I been? The damps of death are on me.

Raby. Look up, my child! O do not leave me thus:
Pity the anguish of thy aged father,
Hast thou forgotten me?

Elwina. You are my father;
O you are kindly come to close my eyes,
And take the kiss of death from my cold lips.

Raby. Do we meet thus?

Elwina. We soon shall meet in peace.
I've but a faint remembrance of the past——
But something tells me——O these painful struggles!
Raise me a little——there——

(*She sees the body of Douglas.*)

What sight is that?
A sword, and bloody? Ah! and Douglas murder'd!

Edric. Convinc'd too late of your unequall'd virtues,
And wrung with deep compunction for your wrongs,
By his own hand the wretched Douglas fell.

Elwina. This adds another, sharper pang to death.
O, thou Eternal! take him to thy mercy!
Nor let this sin be on his head or mine!

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Raby. I have undone you all—the crime is mine!
O thou poor injur'd saint, forgive thy father!
He kneels to his wrong'd child.

Elwina. Now you are cruel.
Come near, my father, nearer—I would see you.
But mists and darkness cloud my failing sight.
O death! suspend thy rights for one short moment,
'Till I have ta'en a father's last embrace—
A father's blessing.—Once—and now 'tis over.
Receive me to thy mercy—gracious heaven. (*She dies.*)

Raby. She's gone! forever gone! Cold, dead and cold.
Am I a father! Fathers love their children——
I murder mine! With impious pride I snatch'd
The bolt of vengeance from the hand of heav'n.
My soul submissive bows. A righteous God
Has made my crime become my chastisement;
And pull'd those mis'ries on my guilty head
I would have drawn on others.—O 'tis just!
'Tis righteous retribution!—I submit!

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EPILOGUE.

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK.

SPOKEN BY MR. LEE LEWES.

I MUST, will speak—I hope my dress and air
Announce the man of fashion, not the player;
Though gentlemen are now forbid the scenes,
Yet have I rush'd through heroes, kings, and queens;
Resolv'd, in pity to this polish'd age,
To drive these ballad-heroes from the stage.
"To drive the deer with hound and horn,
Earl Percy took his way;
The child may rue, that is unborn,
The hunting of that day."
A pretty basis, truly, for a modern play!
What! shall a scribbling, senseless woman dare
To your refinements offer such coarse fare?
Is Douglas, or is Percy, fir'd with passion,
Ready for love or glory, death to dash on,
Fit company for modern still-life men of fashion?
Such madness will our hearts but slightly graze,
We've no such frantic nobles now a-days.
Heart-strings, like fiddle-strings, vibrate no tone,
Unless they're tun'd in perfect unison;
And youths of yore, with ours can ne'er agree—
They're in too sharp, ours in too flat a key.
Could we believe old stories, those strange fellows
Married for love—could of their wives be jealous—

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Nay, constant to 'em too—and, what is worse,
The vulgar souls thought faithless wives a curse.
Most wedded pairs had then one purse, one mind,
One bed too—so preposterously kind—
From such barbarity (thank heav'n) we're much refin'd,
Old songs their happiness at home record,
From home they sep'rate carriages abhorr'd—
One horse serv'd both—my lady rode behind my lord.
'Twas death alone could snap their bonds asunder—
Now tack'd so slightly, not to snap's the wonder.
Nay, death itself could not their hearts divide,
They mix'd their love with monumental pride,
For, cut in stone, they still lie side by side,
But why those Gothic ancestors produce?
Why scour their rusty armours? What's the use?
'Twould not your nicer optics much regale,
To see us beaux bend under coats of mail;
Should we our limbs with iron doublets bruise;
Good heav'n! how much court-plaister we should use;
We wear no armour now—but on our shoes.
Let not with barbarism true taste be blended,
Old vulgar virtues cannot be defended,
Let the dead rest—we living can't be mended.

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THE

FATAL FALSEHOOD:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

As it was acted at the Theatre Royal Covent-Garden.

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TO

THE COUNTESS BATHURST:

THIS TRAGEDY,

IS VERY RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

AS A SMALL TRIBUTE TO HER MANY VIRTUES;

AND AS

A GRATEFUL TESTIMONY

OF THE FRIENDSHIP WITH WHICH SHE

HONOURS

HER MOST OBEDIENT AND MOST

OBLIGED HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

EARL GUILDFORD.

RIVERS, his son.

ORLANDO, a young Italian Count.

BERTRAND.

EMMELINA.

JULIA.

Scene—Earl GUILFORD'S *castle.*

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PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE TRAGEDY.

SPOKEN BY MR. HULL.

Our modern poets now can scarcely choose
A subject worthy of the Tragic Muse;
For bards so well have glean'd th' historic field,
That scarce one sheaf th' exhausted ancients yield;
Or if, perchance, they from the golden crop,
Some grains, with hand penurious, rarely drop;
Our author these consigns to manly toil,
For classic themes demand a classic soil.
A vagrant she, the desert waste who chose,
Where Truth and History no restraints impose.
To her the wilds of Fiction open lie,
A flow'ry prospect, and a boundless sky;
Yet hard the task to keep the onward way,
Where the wide scenery lures the foot to stray;
Where no severer limits check the Muse,
Than lawless Fancy is dispos'd to choose.
Nor does she emulate the loftier strains
Which high, *heroic* Tragedy maintains:
Nor conquests she, nor wars, nor triumphs sings,
Nor with rash hand o'erturns the thrones of kings.
No ruin'd empires greet to-night your eyes,
No nations at our bidding fall or rise;
To statesmen deep, to politicians grave,
These themes congenial to their tastes we leave.
Of crowns and camps, a kingdom's weal or wo,
How few can judge, because how few can know!

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But here you all may boast the censor's art,
Here all are critics who possess a heart.
And of the passions we display to-night,
Each hearer judges like the Stagyrite.
The scenes of private life our author shows,
A simple story of domestic woes;
Nor unimportant is the glass we hold,
To show th' effect of passions uncontroll'd;
For if to govern *realms* belongs to few,
Yet all who live have *passions* to subdue.
Self-conquest is the lesson books should preach,
Self-conquest is the theme the Stage should teach.
Vouchsafe to learn this obvious duty here,
The verse though feeble, yet the moral's clear.
O mark to-night the unexampled woes
Which from unbounded self-indulgence flows.
Your candour once endur'd our author's lays,
Endure them now—it will be ample praise.

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THE FATAL FALSEHOOD.

ACT 1.

Scene—An Apartment in Guildford Castle.

Enter BERTRAND.

Ber. WHAT fools are serious melancholy villains!
I play a surer game, and screen my heart
With easy looks and undesigning smiles;
And while my plots still spring from sober thought,
My deeds appear th' effect of wild caprice,
And I the thoughtless slave of giddy chance.
What but this frankness could have won the promise,
Of young Orlando, to confide to me,
That secret grief which preys upon his heart?
'Tis shallow, indiscreet hypocrisy
To seem too good: I am the *careless* Bertrand,
The honest, undesigning, plain, blunt man.
The follies I avow cloak those I hide,
For who will search where nothing seems conceal'd?
'Tis rogues of solid, prudent, grave demeanor
Excite suspicion; men on whose dark brow
Discretion, with his iron hand has grav'd
The deep-mark'd characters of thoughtfulness.
Here comes my uncle, venerable Guildford,
Whom I could honour, were he not the sire
Of that aspiring boy, who fills the gap
'Twixt me and fortune;—Rivers, how I hate thee!

Enter GUILDFORD.

How fares my noble uncle?

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Guil. Honest Bertrand!
I must complain we have so seldom met:
Where do you keep? believe me we have miss'd you.

Ber. O, my good lord! your pardon—spare me, sir,
For there are follies in a young man's life,
And idle thoughtless hours which I should blush
To lay before your wise and temperate age.

Guil. Well, be it so—youth has a privilege,
And I should be asham'd could I forget
I have myself been young, and harshly chide
This not ungraceful gayety. Yes, Bertrand,
Prudence becomes moroseness, when it makes
A rigid inquisition of the fault,
Not of the man, perhaps, but of his youth.
Foibles that shame the head on which old Time
Has shower'd his snow, are then more pardonable,
And age has many a weakness of its own.

Ber. Your gentleness, my lord, and mild reproof,
Correct the wand'rings of misguided youth
More than rebuke, and shame me into virtue.

Guil. Saw you my beauteous ward, the lady Julia?

Ber. She past this way, and with her your fair daughter,
Your Emmelina.

Guil. Call them both my daughters;
For scarce is Emmelina more belov'd
Than Julia, the dear child of my adoption.
The hour approaches too (and bless it, heaven,
With thy benignest, kindliest influence!)
When Julia shall indeed become my daughter,
Shall, in obedience to her father's will,
Crown the impatient vows of my brave son,
And richly pay him for his dangers past.

Ber. Oft have I wonder'd how the gallant Rivers;
Youthful and ardent, doating to excess,
Could dare the dangers of uncertain war,

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'Ere marriage had confirm'd his claim to Julia.

Guil. 'Twas the condition of her father's will,
My brave old fellow-soldier, and my friend!
He wish'd to see our ancient houses join'd
By this, our children's union; but the veteran
So highly valued military prowess,
That he bequeath'd his fortunes and his daughter
To my young Rivers, on these terms alone,
That he should early gain renown in arms;
And if he from the field return'd a conqueror,
That sun which saw him come victorious home
Should witness their espousals. Yet he comes not!
The event of war is to the brave uncertain,
Nor can desert in arms ensure success.

Ber. Yet fame speaks loudly of his early valour.

Guil. 'Ere since th' Italian count, the young Orlando,
My Rivers' bosom friend has been my guest,
The glory of my son is all his theme:
Oh! he recounts his virtues with such joy,
Dwells on his merit with a zeal so warm,
As to his gen'rous heart pays back again
The praises he bestows.

Ber. Orlando's noble.
He's of a tender, brave, and gallant nature,
Of honour most romantic, with such graces
As charm all womankind.

Guil. And here comes one,
To whom the story of Orlando's praise
Sounds like sweeet music.

Ber. What, your charming daughter!
Yes, I suspect she loves th' Italian count: (*aside*)
That must not be. Now to observe her closely.

Enter EMMELINA.

Guil. Come hither, Emmelina: we were speaking
Of the young count Orlando. What think you
Of this accomplish'd stranger?

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Emm. (*confused.*) Of Orlando?
Sir, as my father's guest, my brother's friend,
I do esteem the count.

Guil. Nay, he has merit
Might justify thy friendship if he wanted
The claims thou mention'st; yet I mean to blame him.

Emm. What has he done? How has he wrong'd my father?
For you are just, and are not angry lightly;
And he is mild, unapt to give offence,
As you to be offended.

Guil. Nay 'tis not much:
But why does young Orlando shun my presence?
Why lose that cheerful and becoming spirit
Which lately charm'd us all? Rivers will chide us,
Should he return and find his friend unhappy.
He is not what he was. What says my child?

Emm. My lord, when first my brother's friend arriv'd—
Be still my heart (*aside*).

Ber. She dares not use his name.
Her brother's friend! (*aside.*)

Emm. When first your noble guest
Came from that voyage, he kindly undertook
To ease our terrors for my Rivers' safety,
When we believ'd him dead; he seem'd most happy,
And shar'd the gen'ral joy his presence gave.
Of late he is less gay; my brother's absence
(Or I mistake) disturbs his friend's repose:
Nor is it strange; one mind informs them both;
Each is the very soul that warms the other,
And both are wretched, or are bless'd together.

Ber. Why trembles my fair cousin?

Emm. Can I think
That my lov'd brother's life has been in danger,
Nor feel a strong emotion?

Ber. (*ironically.*) Generous pity!

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But when that danger has so long been past,
You should forget your terrors.

Emm. I shall never;
For when I think that danger sprung from friendship,
That Rivers, to preserve another's life,
Incurr'd this peril, still my wonder rises.

Ber. And why another's life? Why not Orlando's?
Such caution more betrays than honest freedom.

Guil. He's still the same, the gibing thoughtless Bertrand,
Severe of speech, but innocent of malice.

[*Exit* GUILDFORD: EMMELINA *going.*

Ber. Stay my fair cousin! still with adverse eyes
Am I beheld? Had I Orlando's form,
I mean, were I like him *your brother's friend,*
Then would your looks be turn'd thus coldly on me?

Em. But that I know your levity means nothing,
And that your heart accords not with your tongue,
This would offend me.

Bert. Come, confess the truth,
That this gay Florentine, this Tuscan rover,
Has won your easy heart, and given you his:
I know the whole; I'm of his secret council;
He has confess'd——

Em. Ha! what has he confess'd?

Bert. That you are wond'rous fair: nay, nothing farther:
How disappointment fires her angry cheek! [*Aside.*
Yourself have told the rest, your looks avow it,
Your eyes are honest, nor conceal the secret,

Em. Know, sir, that Virtue no concealment needs:
So far from dreading, she solicits notice,
And wishes every secret thought she harbours,
Bare to the eye of men, as 'tis to heaven.

Bert. Yet mark me well: trust not Orlando's truth:
The citron groves have heard his amorous vows

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Breath'd out to many a beauteous maid of Florence:
Bred in those softer climes, his roving heart
Ne'er learn'd to think fidelity a virtue;
He laughs at tales of British constancy.
But see, Orlando comes—he seeks you here.
With eyes bent downwards, folded arms, pale cheeks,
Disorder'd looks, and negligent attire,
And all the careless equipage of love,
He bends this way. Why does the mounting blood
Thus crimson your fair cheek? He does not see us;
I'll venture to disturb his meditations,
And instantly return. [*Exit* BERTRAND.

Em. No more; but leave me.
He's talkative but harmless, rude but honest;
Fuller of mirth than mischief.—See they meet—
This way they come; why am I thus alarm'd?
What is't to me that here Orlando comes?
Oh for a little portion of that art
Ungenerous men ascribe to our whole sex!
A little artifice were prudence now:
But I have none; my poor unpractis'd heart
Is so unknowing of dissimulation,
So little skill'd to seem the thing it is not,
That if my lips are mute, my looks betray me.

Re-enter BERTRAND *with* ORLANDO.

Bert. Now to alarm her heart, and search out his.
[*Aside.*

Orl. We crave your pardon, beauteous Emmelina,
If rudely we intrude upon your thoughts;
Thoughts pure as infants' dreams or angels' wishes,
And gentle as the breast from which they spring.

Em. Be still, my heart! nor let him see thy weakness.
[*Aside.*

We are much bound to thank you, cousin Bertrand,
That since your late return, the count Orlando

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Appears once more among us.—Say, my lord,
Why have you shunn'd your friends' society?
Was it well done? My father bade me chide you;
I am not made for chiding, but he bade me;
He says, no more you rise at early dawn
With him to chase the boar: I pleaded for you;
Told him 'twas savage sport.

Orl. What was his answer?

Em. He said 'twas sport for heroes, and made heroes;
That hunting was the very school of war,
Taught our brave youth to shine in nobler fields,
Preserv'd 'em from the rust of dull inaction,
Train'd 'em for arms, and fitted them for conquest.

Orl. O, my fair advocate! scarce can I grieve
To have done wrong, since my offence has gain'd
So sweet a pleader.

Bert. (*aside.*) So, I like this well;
Full of respect, but cold.

Em. My lord, your pardon;
My father waits my coming; I attend him. [*Exit.*

Bert. In truth, my lord, you're a right happy man;
Her parting look proclaims that you are blest;
The crimson blushes on her cheek display'd
A gentle strife 'twixt modesty and love:
Discretion strove to dash the rising joy,
But conquering Love prevail'd and told the tale.
My lord, you answer not.

Orl. What shall I say?
Oh, could'st thou read my heart!

Bert. The hour is come
When my impatient friendship claims that trust
Which I so oft have press'd and you have promis'd.

Orl. I cannot tell thee: 'tis a tale of guilt;
How shall I speak? my resolution sickens;
All virtuous men will shun me, thou wilt scorn me,
And fly the foul contagion of my crime.

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Bert. My bosom is not steel'd with that harsh prudence
Which would reproach thy failings: tell me all;
The proudest heart loves to repose its faults
Upon a breast that has itself a tincture
Of human weakness: I have frailties too,
Frailties that teach me how to pity thine.
What! silent still? Thou lov'st my beauteous cousin!
Have I not guess'd?

Orl. I own that she has charms
Might warm a frozen Stoic into love,
Tempt hermits back again to that bad world
They had renounc'd, and make religious men
Forgetful of their holy vows to heaven:
Yet, Bertrand—come, I'll tell thee all my weakness:
Thou hast a tender sympathising heart——
Thou art not rigid to a friend's defects.
That heav'nly form I view with eyes as cold
As marble images of lifeless saints;
I see, and know the workmanship divine;
My judgment owns her exquisite perfections,
But my rebellious heart denies her claim.

Bert. What do I hear! you love her not!

Orl. Oh, Bertrand!
For pity do not hate me; but thou must,
For am I not at variance with myself?
Yet shall I wrong her gentle trusting nature,
And spurn the heart I labour'd to obtain?
She loves me, Bertrand; oh! too sure she loves me;
Loves me with tenderest, truest, chastest passion;
Loves me, oh barb'rous fate! as I love—Julia.

Bert. Heard I aright? Did you not speak of Julia?
Julia, the lovely ward of my good uncle?
Julia! the mistress of your friend, of Rivers?

Orl. Go on, go on, and urge me with my guilt;
Display my crime in all its native blackness;

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Tell me some legend of infernal falsehood,
Tell me some dreadful tale of perjur'd friends,
Of trust betray'd, of innocence deceiv'd:
Place the dire chronicle before my eyes;
Inflame the horror, aggravate the guilt;
That I may see the evils which await me,
Nor pull such fatal mischiefs on my head,
As with my ruin must involve the fate
Of all I love on earth.

Bert. Just as I wish. (*aside.*)

Orl. Thou know'st I left my native Italy,
Directed hither by the noble Rivers,
To ease his father's fears, who thought he fell
In that engagement where we both were wounded;
His was a glorious wound, gain'd in the cause
Of gen'rous friendship; for an hostile spear
Aim'd at my breast, Rivers in his receiv'd,
Sav'd my devoted life, and won my soul.

Bert. So far I knew; but what of Emmelina?

Orl. Whether her gentle beauties first allur'd me,
Or whether peaceful scenes and rural shades,
Or leisure, or the want of other objects,
Or solitude, apt to engender love,
Engag'd my soul, I know not; but I lov'd her.
We were together always, till the habit
Grew into something like necessity.
When Emmelina left me I was sad,
Nor knew a joy till Emmelina came;
Her soft society amus'd my mind,
Fill'd up my vacant heart, and touch'd my soul.
'Twas gratitude, 'twas friendship, 'twas esteem,
'Twas reason, 'twas persuasion, nay, 'twas love.

Bert. But where was Julia?

Orl. Oh! too soon she came;
For when I saw that wond'rous form of beauty,
I stood entranc'd, like some astronomer,

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Who, as he views the bright expanse of heaven,
Finds a new star. I gaz'd, and was undone;
Gaz'd and forgot the tender Emmelina,
Gaz'd, and forgot the gen'rous, trusting Rivers,
Forgot my faith, my friendship, and my honour.

Bert. Does Julia know your love?

Orl. Forbid it, heaven!
What! think'st thou I am so far gone in guilt
As boldly to avow it? Bertrand, no;
For all the kingdoms of the spacious earth,
I would not wrong my friend, or damn my honour.

Bert. Trust me, you judge too hardly of yourself.

Orl. Think I have lodg'd a secret in thy breast
On which my peace, my fame, my all depends;
Long have I struggled with the fatal truth,
And scarce have dar'd to breathe it to myself;
For oh! too surely the first downward step,
The treacherous path that leads to guilty deeds,
Is to make sin familiar to the thoughts. [*Exit.*

Bert. Am I awake?—No: 'tis delusion all!
My wildest wishes never soar'd to this;
Fortune anticipates my plot; he loves her,
Loves just whom I would have him love—loves Julia!
Orlando, yes, I'll play thee at my will;
Poor puppet! thou hast trusted to my hand
The strings by which I'll move thee to thy ruin,
And make thee too the instrument of vengeance,
Of glorious vengeance on the man I hate. [*Exit.*

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ACT II.

Enter JULIA *and* EMMELINA.

Julia. How many cares perplex the maid who loves!
Cares, which the vacant heart can never know.
You fondly tremble for a brother's life,
Orlando mourns the absence of a friend,
Guildford is anxious for a son's renown;
In my poor heart your various terrors meet,
With added fears and fonder apprehensions:
They all unite in me, I feel for all,
His life, his fame, his absence, and his love:
For he may live to see his native home,
And he may live to bless a sister's hopes,
May live to gratify impatient friendship,
May live to crown a father's house with honour,
May live to glory, yet be dead to love.

Em. Forbear these fears; they wound my brother's honour:
Julia! a brave man must be ever faithful;
Cowards alone dare venture to be false;
Cowards alone dare injure trusting virtue,
And with bold perjuries affront high heaven.

Julia. I know his faith, and venerate his virtues;
I know his heart is tender as 'tis brave,
That all his father's worth, his sister's softness,
Meet in his generous breast—and yet I fear——
Whoever lov'd like me, and did not fear?

Enter GUILDFORD.

Guild. Where are my friends, my daughter, where is Julia?
How shall I speak the fulness of my heart?
My son, my Rivers, will this day return.

Em. My dearest brother!

Julia. Ha! my Rivers comes!
Propitious heaven!

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Em. And yet my Julia trembles.

Julia. Have I not cause! my Rivers comes! but how!
I dread to ask, and yet I die to hear.
My lord—you know the terms———

Guild. He comes a conqueror!
He comes as Guildford's son should ever come!
The battle's o'er, the English arms successful,
And Rivers, like an English warrior, hastes
To lay his laurels at the feet of beauty. [*Exit.*

Julia. My joy oppresses me!

Emm. And see, Orlando!
How will the welcome news transport his soul,
And raise his drooping heart! with caution tell him,
Lest the o'erwhelming rapture be too much
For his dejected mind.

Enter ORLANDO *and* BERTRAND.

Jul. My lord Orlando,
Wherefore that troubled air? no more you dwell
On your once darling theme; you speak no more
The praises of your Rivers; is he chang'd?
Is he not still the gallant friend you lov'd,
As virtuous and as valiant?

Or. Still the same;
He must be ever virtuous, ever valiant.

Emm. If Rivers is the same, then must I think
Orlando greatly chang'd; you speak not of him,
Nor long for his return, as you were wont.
How did you use to spend the live-long day,
In telling some new wonders of your friend,
Till night broke in upon th' unfinish'd tale;
And when 'twas o'er, you would begin again,
And we again would listen with delight,
With fresh delight, as if we had not heard it!
Does Rivers less deserve or you less love?

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Or. Have I not lov'd him? was my friendship cold?
When any prais'd his glories in the field,
My raptur'd heart has bounded at the tale!
Methought I grew illustrious from his glory,
And rich from his renown; to hear him prais'd,
More proud than if I had achiev'd his deeds,
And reap'd myself the harvest of his fame.
How have I trembled for a life so dear,
When his too ardent soul, despising caution,
Has plung'd him in the foremost ranks of war,
As if in love with danger.

Julia. Valiant Rivers!
How does thy greatness justify my love!

Ber. He's distant far, so I may safely praise him (*aside.*)
I claim some merit in my love of Rivers,
Since I admire the virtues that eclipse me;
With pleasure I survey those dazzling heights
My gay, inactive temper cannot reach.

Emm. Spoke like my honest cousin. Then, Orlando,
Since such the love you bear your noble friend,
How will your heart sustain the mighty joy
The news I tell will give you? Yes, Orlando,
Restrain the transports of your grateful friendship,
And hear, with moderation, hear me tell you
That Rivers will return——

Orl. How? when?

Emm. This day.

Orl. Impossible!

Ber. Then all my schemes are air (*aside.*)

Emm. To-day I shall embrace my valiant brother!

Jul. You droop, my lord: did you not hear her right?
She told you that your Rivers would return,
Would come to crown your friendship and our hopes.

Orl. He is most welcome! Is he not my friend?
You say my Rivers comes.—Thy arm, good Bertrand!

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Ber. Joy to us all! joy to the count Orlando!
Weak man, take care (*aside to* ORLANDO.)
Emm. My lord! you are not well.
Ber. Surprise and joy oppress him; I myself
Partake his transports. Rouse, my lord, for shame.
Emm. How is it with you now?
Orl. Quite well—'tis past.
Ber. The wonder's past, and nought but joy remains.

Enter GUILDFORD *and* RIVERS.

Guil. He's come! he's here! I have embrac'd my warrior:
Now take me, heav'n, I have liv'd long enough.
Julia. My lord, my Rivers!
Riv. 'Tis my Julia's self!
My life!
Julia. My hero! Do I then behold thee?
Riv. Oh my full heart! expect not words, my Julia!
Emm. Rivers!
Riv. My sister! what an hour is this!
My own Orlando too!
Orl. My noble friend!
Riv. This is such prodigality of bliss,
I scarce can think it real. Honest Bertrand,
Your hand; your's, my Orlando, your's, my father;
And as a hand, I have a heart for all;
Love has enlarg'd it, from excess of love
I am become more capable of friendship.
My dearest Julia!
Guil. She is thine, my son,
Thou hast deserv'd her nobly; thou hast won her,
Fulfill'd the terms——
Riv. Therefore I dare not ask her,
I would not claim my Julia as a debt,
But take her as a gift; and oh! I swear

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It is the dearest, richest, choicest gift,
The bounty of indulgent heaven could grant.

[GUILDFORD *joins their hands.*

Julia. Spare me, my lord.—As yet I scarce have seen you.
Confusion stops my tongue—yet I will own
If there be truth or faith in woman's vows,
Then you have still been present to this heart,
And not a thought has wander'd from its duty.

[*Exeunt* JULIA *and* EMMELINA.

Riv. (*looking after* JULIA.) O generous Julia!

Orl (*aside to* BERTRAND.) Mark how much she loves him!

Ber. (*aside to* ORLANDO.) Mere words, which the fond sex have always ready!

Riv. Forgive me, good Orlando, best of friends!
How my soul joys to meet thee on this shore!
Thus to embrace thee in my much lov'd England!

Guil. England! the land of worth, the soil of heroes,
Where great Elizabeth the sceptre sways,
O'er a free, glorious, rich, and happy people!
Philosophy, not cloister'd up in schools,
The speculative dream of idle monks,
Attir'd in attic robe, here roams at large;
Wisdom is wealth, and science is renown.
Here sacred laws protect the meanest subject,
The bread that toil procures fair Freedom sweetens,
And every peasant eats his homely meal,
Content and free, lord of his small domain.

Riv. Past are those Gothic days, and thanks to heaven,
They are forever past, when English subjects
Were born the vassals of some tyrant lord!
When free-soul'd men were basely handed down
To the next heir, transmitted with their lands,
The shameful legacy from sire to son!

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Guil. But while thy generous soul, my noble boy,
Justly abhors oppression, yet revere
The plain stern virtues of our rough forefathers:
O never may the gallant sons of England
Lose their plain, manly, native character,
Forego the glorious charter nature gave 'em,
Beyond what kings can give, or laws bestow,
Their candour, courage, constancy, and truth!

Exeunt GUILDFORD *and* RIVERS.

Orl. Stay, Bertrand, stay—Oh, pity my distraction!
This heart was never made to hide its feelings;
I had near betray'd myself.

Ber. I trembled for you;
Remember that the eye of love is piercing,
And Emmelina mark'd you.

Orl. 'Tis too much!
My artless nature cannot bear disguise.
Think what I felt when unsuspecting Rivers
Press'd me with gen'rous rapture to his bosom,
Profess'd an honest joy, and call'd me friend!
I felt myself a traitor: yet I swear,
Yes, by that Power who sees the thoughts of men
I swear, I love the gallant Rivers more
Than light or life! I love, but yet I fear him:
I shrunk before the lustre of his virtue——
I felt as I had wrong'd him—felt abash'd.
I cannot bear this conflict in my soul,
And therefore have resolv'd——

Ber. On what!

Orl. To fly.

Ber. To fly from Julia?

Orl. Yes, to fly from all;
From every thing I love; to fly from Rivers,
From Emmelina, from myself, from thee:
From Julia! no—that were impossible,

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For I shall bear her image in my soul;
It is a part of me, the dearest part;
So closely interwoven with my being,
That I can never lose the dear remembrance,
Till I am robb'd of life and her together.

Ber. 'Tis cowardice to fly.

Orl. 'Tis death to stay.

Ber. Where would you go? How lost in thought he stands! (*aside.*)
A vulgar villain now would use persuasion,
And by his very earnestness betray
The thing he meant to hide; I'll coolly wait,
Till the occasion shows me how to act,
Then turn it to my purpose. Ho! Orlando!
Where would you go?

Orl. To solitude, to hopeless banishment!
Yes, I will shroud my youth in those dark cells
Where Disappointment steals Devotion's name,
To cheat the wretched votary into ruin;
There will I live in love with misery;
Ne'er shall the sight of mirth profane my grief,
The sound of joy shall never charm my ear,
Nor music reach it, save when the slow bell
Wakes the dull brotherhood to lifeless prayer.
Then, when the slow-retreating world recedes,
When warm desires are cold, and passion dead,
And all things but my Julia are forgotten,
One thought of her shall fire my languid soul,
Chase the faint orison, and feed despair.

Ber. What! with monastic, lazy drones retire,
And chant cold hymns with holy hypocrites?
First perish all the sex! forbid it, manhood!
Where is your nobler self? for shame Orlando;
Renounce this superstitious, whining weakness,

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Or I shall blush to think I call'd you friend.

Orl. What can I do?

Ber. (*after a pause.*) Beg she'll defer the marriage
But for one single day; do this, and leave
The rest to me: she shall be thine.

Orl. How say'st thou?
What, wrong her virtue?

Ber. Still this cant of virtue!
This pomp of words, this phrase without a meaning!
I grant that honour's something, manly honour;
I'd fight, I'd burn, I'd bleed, I'd die for honour;
But what's this virtue?

Orl. Ask you what it is?
Why 'tis what libertines themselves adore;
'Tis that which wakens love and kindles rapture
Beyond the rosy lip or starry eye.
Virtue! 'tis that which gives a secret force
To common charms; but to true loveliness
Lends colouring celestial. Such its power,
That she who ministers to guilty pleasures,
Assumes its semblance when she most would please.
Virtue! 'tis that ethereal energy
Which gives to body spirit, soul to beauty. [*Exit.*

Ber. Curse on his principles! Yet I shall shake them;
Yes I will bend his spirit to my will,
Now while 'tis warm with passion: and will take
Whatever mould my forming hand will give it.
'Tis worthy of my genius! Then I love
This Emmelina—true she loves not me—
But should young Rivers die, his father's lands
Would then be mine—Is Rivers then immortal?
Come—Guildford's lands and his proud daughter's hand
Are worth some thought.—Aid me ye spurs to genius!
Love, Mischief, Poverty, Revenge and Envy! [*Exit* BER.

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Enter EMMELINA *and* RIVERS *talking.*

Emm. Yet do not blame Orlando, good my brother;
He's still the same, that brave frank heart you lov'd;
Only his temper's chang'd, he is grown sad;
But that's no fault, I only am to blame;
Fond foolish heart, to give itself away
To one who gave me nothing in return!

Riv. How's this? my father said Orlando lov'd thee.

Emm. Indeed I thought so—he was kinder once;
Nay still he loves, or my poor heart deceives me.

Riv. If he has wrong'd thee! yet I know he could not;
His gallant soul is all made up of virtues,
And I would rather doubt myself than him.
Yet tell me all the story of your loves,
And let a brother's fondness sooth thy cares.

Emmel. When to this castle first Orlando came,
A welcome guest to all, to me most welcome;
Yes, spite of maiden shame and burning blushes,
Let me confess he was most welcome to me!
At first my foolish heart so much deceiv'd me,
I thought I lov'd him for my brother's sake;
But when I closely search'd this bosom traitor,
I found, alas! I lov'd him for his own.

Rivers. Blush not to own it; 'twas a well plac'd flame!
I glory in the merit of my friend,
And love my sister more for loving him.

Emmel. He talk'd of you; I listen'd, with delight,
And fancy'd 'twas the subject only charm'd me;
But when Orlando chose another theme,
Forgive me, Rivers, but I listen'd still
With undiminish'd joy—he talk'd of love,
Nor was that theme less grateful than the former!
I seem'd the very idol of his soul;
Rivers, he said, would thank me for the friendship

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I bore to his Orlando; I believ'd him.
Julia was absent then—but what of Julia?

Rivers. Ay, what of her indeed? Why nam'd you Julia?
You could not surely think? no, that were wild.
Why did you mention Julia?

Emmel. (*confusedly.*) Nay! 'twas nothing,
'Twas accident, nor had my words a meaning;
If I did name her—'twas to note the time——
To mark the period of Orlando's coldness——
The circumstance was casual, and but meant
To date the change? it aim'd at nothing farther.

Rivers (*agitated.*) 'Tis very like—no more—I'm satisfy'd——
You talk as I had doubts: what doubts have I?
Why do you labour to destroy suspicions
Which never had a birth? Is she not mine?
Mine by the fondest ties of dear affection?
But *did* Orlando change at her return?
Did he grow cold? It could not be for that;
You may mistake—And yet you said 'twas *then;*
Was it *precisely* then?—I only ask
For the fond love I bear my dearest sister.

Emmel. 'Twas as I said.

Rivers (*recovering himself.*) He loves thee, Emmelina:
These starts of passion, this unquiet temper
Betray how much he loves thee: yes, my sister,
He fears to lose thee, fears his father's will
May dash his rising hopes, nor give thee to him.

Emmel. Oh, flatterer! thus to sooth my easy nature
With tales of possible, unlikely bliss!
Because it *may* be true, my credulous heart
Whispers it is, and fondly loves to cherish
The feeble glimmering of a sickly hope.

Rivers. This precious moment, worth a tedious age
Of vulgar time, I've stol'n from love and Julia;

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She waits my coming, and a longer stay
Were treason to her beauty and my love.
Doubts vanish, fears recede, and fondness triumphs.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

Scene—A garden.

Emmel. Why do my feet unbidden seek this grove?
Why do I trace his steps? I thought him here;
This is his hour of walking, and these shades
His daily haunt: oft have they heard his vows:
Ah! fatal vows, which stole my peace away!
But now he shuns my presence: yet who knows,
He may not be ungrateful, but unhappy!
Yes, he will come to clear his past offences,
With such prevailing eloquence will plead,
So mourn his former faults, so blame his coldness,
And by ten thousand graceful ways repair them,
That I shall think I never was offended.
He comes, and every doubt's at once dispell'd:
'Twas fancy all; he never meant to wrong me.

Enter ORLANDO.

Orlan. Why at this hour of universal joy,
When every heart beats high with grateful rapture,
And pleasure dances her enchanting round,
O tell me why, at this auspicious hour,
You quit the joyful circle of your friends;
Rob social pleasure of its sweetest charm,
And leave a void e'en in the happiest hearts,
An aching void which only you can fill?
Why do you seek these unfrequented shades?

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Why court these gloomy haunts, unfit for beauty;
But made for meditation and misfortune?

Emmel. I might retort the charge, my lord Orlando!
I *might* inquire how the lov'd friend of Rivers,
Whom he has held deep-rooted in his heart
Beyond a brother's dearness, sav'd his life,
And cherish'd it when sav'd beyond his own:——
I *might* inquire, why when this Rivers comes,
After long tedious months of expectation,
Alive, victorious, and as firm in friendship
As fondness could have wish'd or fancy feign'd;
I *might* inquire why thus Orlando shuns him——
Why thus he courts this melancholy gloom,
As if he were at variance with delight,
And scorn'd to mingle in the general joy?

Orlan. Oh, my fair monitress! I have deserv'd
Your gentle censure. Henceforth I'll be gay.

Emmel. Julia complains too of you.

Orlan. Ah! does Julia?
If Julia chides me I have err'd indeed;
For harshness is a stranger to her nature.
But why does she complain? O tell me wherefore?
That I may soon repair the unwilling crime,
And prove my heart at least ne'er meant to wrong her.

Emmel. Why so alarm'd?

Orlan. Alarm'd!

Emmel. Indeed you seem'd so.

Orlan. Sure you mistake. Alarm'd! oh no, I was not;
There was no cause---I could not be alarm'd
Upon so slight a ground. Something you said,
But what I know not, of your friend.

Emmel. Of Julia?

Orlan. That Julia was displeas'd——was it not so?
'Twas that, or something like it.

Emmel. She complains
That you avoid her.

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Orlan. How! that I avoid her?
Did Julia say so? ah! you have forgot——
It could not be.

Emmel. Why are you terrified?

Orlan. No.
Not terrified---I am not---but were those
Her very words? you might mistake her meaning;
Did Julia say Orlando shunn'd her presence?
Oh! did she, could she say so?

Emmel. If she did,
Why this disorder? there's no cause.

Orlan. No cause?
O there's a cause of dearer worth than empire!
Quick let me fly, and find the fair upbraider;
Tell her she wrongs me, tell her I would die
Rather than meet her anger. [EMMELINA *faints.*
Ah, she faints!
What have I said? curse my imprudent tongue!
Look up, sweet innocence! my Emmelina——
My gentle friend, awake! look up, fair creature!
'Tis your Orlando calls.

Emmel. Orlando's voice!
Methought he talk'd of love---nay, do not mock me;
My heart is but a weak, a very weak one!
I am not well---perhaps I've been to blame.
Spare my distress; the error has been mine.
[*Exit* EMMELINA.

Orlan. So then, all's over; I've betray'd my secret,
And stuck a poison'd dagger to her heart,
Her innocent heart. Why what a wretch am I!
Ruin approaches---shall I tamely meet it,
And dally with destruction till it blast me?
No, I will fly thee, Julia, fly forever.
Ah fly! what then becomes of Emmelina?
Shall I abandon *her?* it must be so;
Better escape with this poor wreck of honour,
Than hazard all by staying.—Rivers here?

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Enter RIVERS.

Riv. The same. My other self! my own Orlando!
I came to seek thee; twas in thy kind bosom,
My suffering soul repos'd its secret cares,
When doubts and difficulties stood before me:
And now, now when my prosperous fortune shines,
And gilds the smiling hour with her bright beams,
Shall I become a niggard of my bliss,
Defraud thee of thy portion of my joys,
And rob thee of thy well-earn'd claim to share them?

Orl. That I have ever lov'd thee, witness heaven!
That I have thought thy friendship the best blessing
That mark'd the fortune of my happier days,
I here attest the sovereign Judge of hearts!
Then think, O think what anguish I endure,
When I declare, in bitterness of spirit,
That we must part—

Riv. What does Orlando mean?

Orl. That I must leave thee, Rivers; must renounce
Thy lov'd society.

Riv. Thou hast been injur'd;
Thy merit has been slighted; sure my father,
Who knew how dear I held thee, would not wrong thee.

Orl. He is all goodness; no—there is a cause———
Seek not to know it.

Riv. Now, by holy friendship!
I swear thou shalt not leave me; what, just now,
When I have safely pass'd so many perils,
Escap'd so many deaths, return'd once more
To the kind arms of long desiring friendship;
Just now, when I expected such a welcome,
As happy souls in Paradise bestow
Upon a new inhabitant, who comes
To taste their blessedness, you coldly tell me
You will depart; it must not be, Orlando.

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Orl. It must, it must.

Riv. Ah, must! then tell me wherefore?

Orl. I would not dim thy dawn of happiness,
Nor shade the brighter beams of thy good fortune,
With the dark sullen cloud that hangs o'er mine:

Riv. Is this the heart of him I call'd my friend,
Full of the graceful weakness of affection?
How have I known it bend at my request!
How lose the power of obstinate resistance,
Because his friend entreated! This Orlando!
How is he changed!

Orl. Alas, how chang'd indeed!
How dead to every relish of delight!
How chang'd in all but in his love for thee!
Yet think not that my nature is grown harder,
That I have lost that ductile, yielding heart;
Rivers, I have not—oh! 'tis still too soft;
E'en now it melts, it bleeds in tenderness—
Farewell!—I dare not trust myself—farewell!

Riv. Then thou resolv'st to go?

Orl. This very day?

Riv. What do I hear? To-day! It must not be;
This is the day that makes my Julia mine.

Orl. Wed her to-day?

Riv. This day unites me to her;
Then stay at least till thou behold'st her mine.

Orl. Impossible! another day were ruin.

Riv. Then let me fly to Julia, and conjure her
To bless me with her hand this hour—this moment.

Orl. Oh! no, no, no!

Riv. I will: in such a cause
Surely she will forego the rigid forms
Of cold decorum; then, my best Orlando!
I shall receive my Julia from thy hand;
The blessing will be doubled! I shall owe
The precious gift of love to sacred friendship!

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Orl. Can'st thou bear this, my heart?

Riv. Then, my Orlando,
Since thy unkind reserve denies my heart
Its partnership in this thy hoard of sorrows,
I will not press to know it: thou shalt go
Soon as the holy priest has made us one:
For oh! 'twill sooth thee in the hour of parting,
To know I'm in possession of my love,
To think I'm blest with Julia, to reflect
Thou gav'st her to my arms, my bride! my wife!

Orl. Ah! my brain turns!

Riv. 'Tis as I thought; I'll try him. (*aside.*)
Now answer me, Orlando, and with truth;
Hide nothing from thy friend—dost thou not love?

Orl. Ha! how! I am betray'd! he reads my heart.

Riv. Hast thou with all that tenderness of soul,
From Love's infection kept thy yielding heart?
Say, could'st thou bask in all the blaze of Beauty,
And never feel its warmth?—Impossible!
O I shall probe thy soul till thou confess
The conqu'ring fair one's name—but why confess?
Come, come, I know full well—

Orl. Ha! dost thou know?
And knowing, dost thou suffer me to live?
And dost thou know my guilt, and call me friend?
He mocks but to destroy me!

Riv. Come, no more;
Love is a proud, an arbitrary god,
And will not chuse as rigid fathers bid;
I know that thine has destin'd for thy bride
A Tuscan maid: but hearts disdain all force.

Orl. How's this? what, dost thou justify my passion?

Riv. Applaud it—glory in it—will assist it.
She is so fair, so worthy to be lov'd,

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That I should be thy rival, were not she
My sister.

Orl. How!

Riv. She is another Julia.

Orl. I stood upon a fearful precipice—
I'm giddy still—oh, yes! I understand thee—
Thy beauteous sister! what a wretch I've been!
Oh, Rivers! too much softness has undone me.
Yet I will never wrong the maid I love,
Nor injure thee; first let Orlando perish!

Riv. Be more explicit.

Orl. For the present spare me.
Think not too hardly of me, noble Rivers!
I am a man, and full of human frailties;
But hate like hell the crime which tempts me on.
When I am ready to depart, I'll see thee,
Clear all my long accounts of love and honour,
Remove thy doubts, embrace thee, and expire.

[*Exit* ORLANDO.

Manet RIVERS.

It must be so—to what excess he loves her!
Yet wherefore not demand her? for his birth
May claim alliance with the proudest fortune.
Sure there's some hidden cause—perhaps—ah, no!
Turn from that thought, my soul! 'twas vile suspicion;
And I could hate the heart which but conceiv'd it.
'Tis true their faiths are different—then his father,
Austere and rigid, dooms him to another.
That must not be—these bars shall be remov'd;
I'll serve him with my life, nor taste of bliss,
'Till I have sought to bless the friend I love. [*Exit.*

Re-enter ORLANDO.

Orl. Wed her to-day? wed her perhaps this hour?
Hasten the rites for *me? I* give her to him?

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I stand a tame spectator of their bliss?
I live a patient witness of their joy?
First let this dagger drink my heart's warm blood.
(*Takes a dagger from his bosom, then sees* JULIA.)
The sorceress comes! oh, there's a charm about her
Which holds my hand, and makes me wish to live.
I shudder at her sight! open, thou earth,
And save me from the peril of her charms!
[*Puts up the dagger.*

Enter JULIA.

Julia. Methought I heard the cry of one in pain:
From hence it came; ah, me! my lord Orlando!
What means that sigh? that agonizing voice?
Those groans which rend your heart? those frantic looks?
Indeed I'm terrified. What would you do?
Orl. (*furiously.*) Die!
Julia. Talk you of death? renounce the fatal thought;
Live for my sake, Orlando.
Orl. For thy sake!
That were indeed a cause to live for ages,
Would nature but extend the narrow limits
Of human life so far.
Julia. And for the sake
Of Rivers; live for both; he sends me here
To beg you would delay your purpos'd parting;
His happiness, he swears, if you are absent
Will be but half complete.
Orl. Is it to-night?
This marriage, Julia, did you say to-night?
Julia. It is, and yet you leave us.
Orl. No——I'll stay,
Since you command, stay and expire before you.
Julia. What mean you?
Orl. That I'll perish at the feet
Of——Rivers.

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Julia. Tell your sorrows to my lord;
Upon his faithful breast repose the weight
That presses you to earth.

Orl. Tell *him?* Tell Rivers?
Is he not yours? Does not the priest now wait
To make you one? Then do not mock me thus;
What leisure can a happy bridegroom find
To think upon so lost a wretch as I am?
You hate me, Julia.

Julia. Hate you, how you wrong me!
Live to partake our joy.

Orl. Hope you for joy?

Julia. Have I not cause? Am I not lov'd by Rivers?
Rivers, the best, the bravest of his sex!
Whose valour fabled heroes ne'er surpass'd,
Whose virtues teach the young and charm the old;
Whose graces are the wonder of our sex,
And envy of his own.

Orl. Enough! enough!
O spare this prodigality of praise.
But, Julia, if you would not here behold me,
Stretch'd at your feet a lifelesss bloody corpse,
Promise what I shall now request.

Julia. What is it?

Orl. That till to-morrow's sun, I ask no longer,
You will defer this marriage.

Julia. Ah! defer it!
Impossible; what would my Rivers think?

Orl. No matter what; 'tis for his sake I ask it:
His peace, his happiness, perhaps his life
Depends on what I ask.

Julia. His life! the life of Rivers!
Some dreadful thought seems lab'ring in your breast;
Explain this horrid mystery.

Orl. I dare not.
If you comply, before to-morrow's dawn

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All will be well, the danger past; then finish
These—happy nuptials; but if you refuse,
Tremble for him you love; the altar's self
Will be no safeguard from a madman's rage.

Julia. What rage! what madman! what remorseless villain!
Orlando—will not you protect your friend?
Think how he loves you—he would die for you—
Then save him, on my knees, I beg you save him—

[*Kneels.*

Oh! guard my Rivers from this bloody foe.

Orl. Dearer than life I love him—ask no more,
But promise in the awful face of heaven,
To do what I request—and promise further,
Not to disclose the cause.

Julia. O save him! save him!

Orl. 'Tis to preserve him that I ask it: promise,
Or see me fall before you.

[*He draws the dagger, she still kneeling.*

Julia: I do promise.
Hide, hide that deadly weapon—I do promise. [*Rises.*
How wild you look! you tremble more than I.
I'll call my Rivers hither.

Orl. Not for worlds.
If you have mercy in your nature, Julia,
Retire. Oh leave me quickly to myself;
Do not expose me to the strong temptation
Which now assaults me.—Yet you are not gone.

Julia. Be more compos'd; I leave you with regret.
(*As she goes out.*) His noble mind is shaken from its seat!
What may these transports mean? heaven guard my Rivers!

As JULIA *goes out, enter* BERTRAND; *he speaks behind.*

Ber. Why, this is well; this has a face; she weeps,
He seems disordered.—Now to learn the cause,

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And then make use of what I hear by chance,
As of a thing I knew. (*He listens*).

Orl. (*after a pause.*) And is she gone?
Her parting words shot fire into my soul;
Did she not say she left me with regret?
Her look was tender, and a starting tear
Fill'd her bright eye; she left me with regret—
She own'd it too.

Ber. 'Twill do.
(*Comes forward*) What have you done?
The charming Julia is dissolved in wo,
Her radiant eyes are quench'd in floods of tears;
For you they fall; her blushes have confess'd it.

Orl. For me? what say'st thou? Julia weeps for me!
Yet she is gentle, and she would have wept
For thee; for any who but seem'd unhappy.

Ber. Ungrateful!

Orl. How?

Ber. Not by her tears, I judge,
But by her words, not meant for me to hear.

Orl. What did she say? What didst thou hear, good Bertrand?
Speak—I'm on fire.

Ber. It is not safe to tell you.
Farewell! I would not injure Rivers.

Orl. Stay,
Or tell me all, or I renounce thy friendship.

Ber. That threat unlocks my tongue; I must not lose thee.
Sweet Julia wept, clasp'd her fair hands, and cried,
Why was I left a legacy to Rivers,
Robb'd of the power of choice? Seeing me she started,
Would have recall'd her words, blush'd and retir'd.

Orl. No more; thou shalt not tempt me to my ruin;
Deny what thou hast said, deny it quickly,

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'Ere I am quite undone; for oh! I feel
Retreating virtue touches its last post,
And my lost soul now verges on destruction.
—Bertrand! she promis'd to defer the marriage:

Ber. Then my point's gain'd; that will make Rivers jealous (*aside.*)
She loves you.

Orl. No; and even if she did
I have no hope.

Ber. You are too scrupulous.
Be bold and be successful; sure of this,
There is no crime a woman sooner pardons
Than that of which her beauty is the cause.

Orl. Shall I defraud my friend? he bled to gain her!
What! rob the dear preserver of my life
Of all that makes the happiness of his?
And yet her beauty might excuse a falsehood;
Nay almost sanctify a perjury.
Perdition's in that thought—'twas born in hell.
My soul is up in arms, my reason's lost,
And love, and rage, and jealousy, and honour,
Pull my divided heart, and tear my soul. [*Exit.*

Manet BERTRAND.

Rave on, and beat thy wings; poor bird! thou'rt lim'd,
And vain will be thy struggles to get loose.
—How much your very honest men lack *prudence!*
Though all the nobler virtues fill one scale,
Yet place but indiscretion in the other,
In worldly business, and the ways of men,
That single folly weighs the balance down,
While all th' ascending virtues kick the beam.
Here's this Orlando now, of rarest parts,
Honest, heroic, generous, frank, and kind
As inexperience of the world can make him;
Yet shall this single weakness, this *imprudence*

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Pull down unheard of plagues upon his head,
And snare his heedless soul beyond redemption:
While dull unfeeling hearts, and frozen spirits,
Sordidly safe, secure, because untempted,
Look up and wonder at the generous crime
They wanted wit to frame and souls to dare.

ACT IV.

Scene—An Apartment.

Emm. How many ways there are of being wretched!
The avenues to happiness how few!
When will this busy, fluttering heart be still?
When will it cease to feel and beat no more?
E'en now it shudders with a dire presage
Of something terrible it fears to know.
Ent'ring, I saw my venerable father
In earnest conference with the count Orlando;
Shame and confusion fill'd Orlando's eye,
While stern resentment fir'd my father's cheek.
And look, he comes, with terror on his brow!
But O! he sees me, sees his child; and now
The terror of his look is lost in love,
In fond, paternal love.

Enter GUILDFORD.

Guil. Come to my arms,
And there conceal that penetrating eye,
Lest it should read what I should hide forever,
Would hide from all, but most would hide from thee—
Thy father's grief, his shame, his rage, his tears.

Emm. Tears! heaven and earth! see if he does not weep?

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Guil. He who has drawn this sorrow from my eyes
Shall pay me back again in tears of blood.
'Tis for thy sake I weep.

Emm. Ah, weep for me!
Hear, heaven, and judge; hear, heaven, and punish me!
If any crime of mine——

Guil. Thou art all innocence;
Just what a parent's fondest wish would frame;
No fault of thine e'er stain'd thy father's cheek;
If I blush'd, it was to hear thy virtues,
And think that thou wast mine: and if I wept,
It was from joy and gratitude to heav'n,
That made me father of a child like thee.
Orlando——

Emm. What of him?

Guil. I cannot tell thee;
An honest shame, a virtuous pride forbids.

Emm. Oh speak!

Guil. Canst thou not guess and spare thy father?

Emm. 'Tis possible I can—and yet I will not:
Tell me the worst while I have sense to hear.
Thou wilt not speak—nay never turn away;
Dost thou not know that fear is worse than grief?
There may be bounds to grief, fear knows no bounds;
In grief we know the worst of what we feel,
But who can tell the end of what we fear?
Grief mourns some sorrow palpable and known,
But fear runs wild with horrible conjecture.

Guil. Then hear the worst, and arm thy soul to bear it.
My child!—he has—Orlando has refus'd thee.

Emm. (*after a long pause.*) 'Tis well—'tis very well—'tis as it should be.

Guil. Oh, there's an eloquence in that mute wo
Which mocks all language. Speak, relieve thy heart,
Thy bursting heart; thy father cannot bear it.

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Am I a man? no more of this fond eyes!
I am grown weaker than a chidden infant,
While not a sigh escapes to tell thy pain.

Emm. See, I am calm; I do not shed a tear;
The warrior weeps, the woman is a hero!

Guil. (*embraces her.*) My glorious child! now thou art mine indeed!
Forgive me if I thought thee fond and weak.
I have a Roman matron for my daughter,
And not a feeble girl. And yet I fear,
For oh! I know thy tenderness of soul,
I fear this silent anguish but portends
Some dread convulsion soon to burst in horrors.

Emm. I will not shame thy blood; and yet my father,
Methinks thy daughter should not be refus'd!
Refus'd? It is a harsh, ungrateful sound;
Thou shouldst have found a softer term of scorn.
And have I then been held so cheap? Refus'd?
Been treated like the light ones of my sex,
Held up to sale? been offer'd, and refus'd?

Guil. Long have I known thy love; I thought it mutual;
I met him—talk'd of marriage——

Emm. Ah! no more:
I am rejected;—does not that suffice?
Excuse my pride the mortifying tale;
Spare me particulars of how and when,
And do not parcel out thy daughter's shame.
No flowers of rhetoric can change the fact,
No arts of speech can varnish o'er my shame;
Orlando has refus'd me.

Guil. Villain! villain!
He shall repent this outrage.

Emm. Think no more on't:
I'll teach thee how to bear it; I'll grow proud,
As gentle spirits still are apt to do

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When cruel slight or killing scorn assails them,
Come, virgin dignity, come, female pride,
Come, wounded modesty, come, slighted love,
Come, conscious worth, come too, O black despair!
Support me, arm me, fill me with my wrongs!
Sustain this feeble spirit!—Yes, my father,
But for thy share in this sad tale of shame,
I think I could have borne it.

Guil. Thou hast a brother;
He shall assert thy cause.

Emm. First strike me dead!
No, in the wild distraction of my spirit,
In this dread conflict of my breaking heart,
Hear my fond pleading—save me from that curse;
Thus I adjure thee by the dearest ties (*kneels*)
Which link society; by the sweet names
Of parent and of child; by all the joys
These tender claims have yielded, I adjure thee
Breathe not this fatal secret to my brother;
Let him not know his sister was refus'd!
O spare me that consummate, perfect ruin!
Conceive the mighty wo—I cannot speak;
And tremble to become a childless father.

[*Exit* EMMELINA.

Guil. What art thou life! thou lying vanity!
Thou promiser, who never mean'st to pay!
This beating storm will crush my feeble age!
Yet let me not complain; I have a son,
Just such a son as heaven in mercy gives,
When it would bless supremely; he is happy;
His ardent wishes will this day be crown'd;
He weds the maid he loves; in him, at least,
My soul will yet taste comfort.—See! he's here;
He seems disorder'd.

Enter RIVERS (*not seeing* GUILDFORD.)

Riv. Yes, I fondly thought
'ot all the tales which malice might devise

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Not all the leagues combined hell might form
Could shake her steady soul.

Guil. What means my son?
Where is thy bride?

Riv. O name her not?

Guil. Not name her?

Riv. No: if possible, not think of her;
Would I could help it;—Julia! oh my Julia!
Curse my fond tongue; I said I would not name her;
I did not think to do it, but my heart
Is full of her idea; her lov'd image
So fills all my soul, it shuts out other thoughts;
My lips resolving not to frame the sound,
Dwell on her name, and all my talk is Julia!

Guil. 'Tis as it should be; 'ere the midnight bell
Sound in thy raptured ear this charming Julia
Will be thy wife.

Riv. No.

Guil. How?

Riv. She has refus'd.

Guil. Say'st thou?

Riv. She has.

Guil. Why who would be a father!
Who that could guess the wretchedness it brings,
But would entreat of heaven to write him childless?

Riv. 'Twas but a little hour ago we parted,
As happy lovers should; but when again
I sought her presence; with impatient haste,
Told her the priest, the altar, all was ready;
She blush'd, she wept, and vow'd it could not be;
That reasons of importance to our peace
Forbad the nuptial rights to be perform'd
Before to-morrow.

Guil. She consents to-morrow!
She but defers the marriage, not declines it.

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Riv. Mere subterfuge! mere female artifice!
What reason should forbid our instant union?
Wherefore to-morrow? wherefore not to-night?
What difference could a few short hours have made?
Or if they could, why not avow the cause?

Guil. I have grown old in camps; have liv'd in courts;
The toils of bright ambition have I known,
Woo'd greatness and enjoy'd it, till disgust
Follow'd possession; still I fondly look'd
Through the false perspective for distant joy,
Hop'd for the hour of honourable ease,
When, safe from all the storms and wrecks of fate,
My shatter'd bark at rest, I might enjoy
An old man's blessings, liberty and leisure,
Domestic happiness, and smiling peace.
The hour of age indeed is come! I feel it;
Feel it in all its sorrows, all its pains, and cares;
But where, oh where's th' untasted peace it promis'd?
[*Exit* GUILDFORD.

Rivers. I would not deeper wound my father's peace;
But hide the secret cause of my resentment,
Till all be known; and yet I know too much.
It must be so—his grief, his sudden parting:
Fool that I was, not to perceive at once—
But friendship blinded me, and love betray'd.
Bertrand was right, he told me she was chang'd,
And would, on some pretence, delay the marriage.
I hop'd 'twas malice all. Yonder she comes,
Dissolv'd in tears; I cannot see them fall,
And be a man; I will not, dare not meet her;
Her blandishments would sooth me to false peace,
And if she ask'd it, I should pardon all. [*Exit.*

Enter JULIA.

Julia. Stay, Rivers! stay, barbarian! hear me speak!
Return, inhuman!—best belov'd! return;
Oh! I will tell thee all, restore thy peace,

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Kneel at thy feet, and sue for thy forgiveness.
He hears me not—alas! he will not hear.
Break thou, poor heart, since Rivers is unkind.

Enter ORLANDO.

Orlan. Julia in tears!

Julia. Alas! you have undone me!
Behold the wretched victim of her promise!
I urg'd, at your request, the fatal suit
Which has destroy'd my peace; Rivers suspects me,
And I am wretched!

Orlan. Better 'tis to weep
A temporary ill than weep forever;
That anguish must be mine.

Julia. Ha! weep forever!
Can they know wretchedness who know not love?

Orlan. Not love! oh, cruel friendship? tyrant honour!

Julia. Friendship! alas, how cold art thou to love!

Orlan. Too well I know it; both alike destroy me,
I am the slave of both, and more than either
The slave of honour.

Julia. If you then have felt
The bitter agonies——

Orlan. Talk *you* of agonies?
You who are lov'd again! No! they are mine;
Mine are the agonies of hopeless passion;
Yes, I do love—I doat, I die for love!
(*He falls at her feet*) Julia!

Julia. How?

Orlan. Nay, never start—I know I am a villain!
I know thy hand is destin'd to another,
That other too my friend, that friend the man
To whom I owe my life! Yes, I adore thee;
Spite of the black ingratitude adore thee;
I doat upon my friend and yet betray him,
I'm bound to Emmelina, yet forsake her,
I honour virtue while I follow guilt,

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I love the noble Rivers more than life,
But Julia more than honour.

Julia. Hold! astonishment
Has seal'd my lips; whence sprung this monstrous daring?

Orlan. (*rises*) From despair.

Julia. What can you hope from me?

Orlan. Hope! nothing.
I would not aught receive, aught hope but death.
Think'st thou I need reproach? Think'st thou I need
To be reminded that my love's a crime?
That every moral tie forbids my passion?
But though I know that heav'n has plagues in store,
Yet mark—I do not, will not, can't repent;
I do not even wish to love thee less;
I glory in my crime: pernicious beauty!
Come, triumph in thy power, complete my woes:
Insult me with the praises of my rival,
The man on earth—whom most I ought to love!

Julia. I leave thee to remorse, and to that penitence
Thy crime demands (*going.*)

Orlan. A moment stay.

Julia. I dare not.

Orlan. Hear all my rival's worth, and all my guilt.
The unsuspecting Rivers sent me to thee,
To plead his cause; I basely broke my trust,
And, like a villain, pleaded for myself.

Julia. Did he? did Rivers? Then he loves me still—
Quick let me seek him out.

Orlan (*takes out the dagger*) First take this dagger;
Had you not forc'd it from my hand to-day,
I had not liv'd to know this guilty moment:
Take it, present it to the happy Rivers;
Tell him to plunge it in a traitor's heart,
Tell him his friend, Orlando, is that traitor,
Tell him Orlando forg'd the guilty tale,

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Tell him Orlando was the only foe
Who at the altar would have murdered Rivers,
And then have died himself.

Julia. Farewell—repent—think better.

[*Exit* JULIA.

(*As she goes out, he still looks after her.*)

Enter RIVERS.

Riv. Turn, villain, turn!

Orlan. Ha! Rivers here?

Riv. Yes, Rivers.

Orlan. Gape wide, thou friendly earth, forever hide me!
Rise, Alps, ye crushing mountains, bury me!

Riv. Nay, turn, look on me.

Orlan. Rivers! oh, I cannot,
I dare not, I have wrong'd thee.

Riv. Doubly wrong'd me;
Thy complicated crimes cry out for vengeance.

Orlan. Take it.

Riv. But I would take it as a man.
Draw. (RIVERS *draws.*)

Orlan. Not for a thousand worlds.

Riv. Not fight?
Why thou'rt a coward too as well as villain:
I shall despise as well as hate thee.

Orlan. Do;
Yet wrong me not, for if I am a coward
'Tis but to thee: there does not breathe the man,
Thyself excepted, who durst call me so
And live; but, oh! 'tis sure to heav'n and thee,
I am the veriest coward guilt 'ere made.
Now, as thou art a man, revenge thyself;
Strike!

Riv. No, not stab thee like a base assassin
But meet thee as a foe.

Orlan. Think of my wrongs!

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Riv. I feel them here.

Orlan. Think of my treachery.

Riv. Oh, wherefore wast thou false? how have I lov'd thee!

Orlan. Of that no more: think of thy father's grief;
Of Emmelina's wrongs——

Riv. Provoke me not.

Orlan. Of Julia——

Riv. Ha! I shall forget my honour,
And do a brutal violence upon thee,
Would tarnish my fair fame. Villain and coward!
Traitor! will nothing rouse thee?

Orlan. (*drawing*) Swelling heart!
Yet this I have deserv'd, all this, and more.

As they prepare to fight enter EMMELINA *hastily.*

Emmel. Lend me your swiftness, lightnings—'tis too late.
See they're engag'd—oh no—they live, both live!
Hold, cruel men!

Riv. Unlucky! 'tis my sister.

Emmel. Ye men of blood! if yet you have not lost
All sense of human kindness, love, or pity;
If ever you were dear to one another;
If ever you desire or look for mercy,
When in the wild extremity of anguish,
You supplicate that Judge who has declar'd
That vengeance is his own—oh, hear me now;
Hear a fond wretch, whom misery has made bold;
Spare, spare each other's life—spare your own souls.

Orlan. (*to* RIVERS.) Thou should'st have struck at once! O tardy hand!

Emmel. Does death want engines? is his power curtail'd?
Has fell disease forgotten to destroy?
Are there not pestilence and spotted plagues,
Devouring deluges, consuming fires,

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Earthquakes, volcanos, hurricanes and famine,
That man must perish by the hand of man?
Nay, to complete the horror, friend by friend?

Riv. What, shall I then endure this outrage tamely?

Emmel. No.—If you *covet* death; if you're in *love*
With slaughter and destruction—does not war
Invite you to her banner? Far and wide
Her dire dominion reaches.—There seek death.
There fall without a crime. There, where no hate,
No individual rage, no private wrong,
Arms man against his brother.—Not as here,
Where *both* are often *murderers* in the *act;*
In the *foul purpose—always.*

Riv. Is honour nothing?

Emmel. Honour! O yes, I know him. 'Tis a phantom;
A shadowy figure wanting bulk and life;
Who having nothing solid in himself,
Wraps his thin form in Virtue's plunder'd robe,
And steals her title. Honour! 'tis the fiend
Who feeds on orphans' tears and widows' groans,
And slakes his impious thirst in brothers' blood.
Honour! why 'tis the primal law of hell!
The grand device to people the dark realms
With noble spirits, who but for this curst honour
Had been at peace on earth, or bless'd in heaven.
With this *false* honour Christians have no commerce,
Religion disavows, and truth disowns it.

Orl. (*Throws away his sword.*) An angel speaks, and angels claim obedience.

Riv. (*to* ORLANDO.) This is the heart thou hast wrong'd.

Emm. (*comes up to* ORLANDO) I pity thee;
Calamity has taught me how to pity:
Before I knew distress, my heart was hard;
But now it melts at every touch of wo;
And wholesome sufferings bring it back to virtue.

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Rivers, he once was good and just like thee:
Who shall be proud and think he stands secure,
If thy Orlando's false?

Riv. Think of his crime.

Emm. Oh, think of his temptation! think 'twas Julia;
Thy heart could not resist her; how should *his?*
It is the very error of his friendship.
Your souls were fram'd so very much alike,
He could not chuse but love whom Rivers lov'd.

Orl. Think'st thou there is in death a pang like this?
Strike, my brave friend! be sudden and be silent!
Death, which is terrible to happy men,
To me will be a blessing: I have lost
All that could make life dear; I've lost my friend;
I've stab'd the peace of mind of that fair creature,
I have surviv'd my honour: this is dying!
The mournful fondness of officious love
Will plant no thorns upon my dying pillow;
No precious tears embalm my memory,
But curses follow it.

Emm. See, Rivers melts;
He pities thee.

Orl. I'll spare thy noble heart
The pain of punishing: Orlando's self
Revenges both. (*Goes to stab himself with the dagger.*)

Emm. Barbarian! kill me first.

Riv. (*snatching the dagger.*) Thou shalt not die! I swear I love thee still:
That secret sympathy which long has bound us,
Pleads for thy life with sweet but strong entreaty.
Thou shalt repair the wrongs of that dear saint,
And be again my friend.

Orl. Oh, hear me.

Emm. No.
I cannot stoop to live on charity,

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And what but charity is love compelled?
I've been a weak, a fond, believing woman,
And credulous beyond my sex's softness:
But with the weakness, I've the pride of woman.
I lov'd with virtue, but I fondly lov'd;
That passion fix'd my fate, determin'd all,
And mark'd at once the colour of my life.
Hearts that love well, love long, they love but once.
My peace thou hast destroy'd, my honour's mine:
She who aspir'd to gain Orlando's heart,
Shall never owe Orlando's hand to pity.

[*Exit* EMMELINA.

Orl. (*after a pause*) And I still live!

Riv. Farewell! should I stay longer
I might forget my vow.

Orl. Yet hear me, Rivers.

[*Exit* RIVERS, ORLANDO *following*.

Enter BERTRAND *on the other side.*

Ber. How's this! my fortune fails me, both alive!
I thought by stirring Rivers to this quarrel,
There was at least an equal chance against him.
I work invisibly, and like the tempter
My agency is seen in its effects.
Well, *honest* Bertrand! now for Julia's letter.
(*Takes out a letter.*) This fond epistle of a love-sick maid,
I've sworn to give, but did not swear to whom.
"Give it my love," said she, "my dearest lord!"
Rivers she meant; there's no address—that's lucky.
Then where's the harm? Orlando is a lord
As well as Rivers, loves her too as well.
(*Breaks open the letter.*) I must admire your style—your pardon, fair one.
(*Runs over it.*) I tread in air—methinks I brush the stars,
And spurn the subject world which rolls beneath me.——

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There's not a word but fits Orlando's case
As well as Rivers';—tender to excess—
No name—'twill do; his faith in me is boundless;
Then, as the brave are still, he's unsuspecting,
And credulous beyond a woman's weakness.
(*Going out, he spies the dagger.*) Orlando's dagger!—
ha! 'tis greatly thought.
This may do noble service; such a scheme!
My genius catches fire! the bright idea
Is form'd at once, and fit for instant action! [*Exit.*

ACT V.

Scene—The Garden.

Ber. 'Twas here we were to meet; where does he stay?
This compound of strange contradicting parts,
Too flexible for virtue, yet too virtuous
To make a flourishing, successful villain.
Conscience! be still; preach not remorse to me;
Remorse is for the luckless, failing villain.
He who succeeds repents not; penitence
Is but another name for ill success.
Was Nero penitent when Rome was burnt?
No: but had Nero been a petty villain,
Subject to laws and liable to fear,
Nero perchance had been a penitent.
He comes:—This paper makes him all my own.

Enter ORLANDO.

Orl. At length this wretched tempest-beaten bark
Seems to have found its haven: I'm resolv'd;
My wav'ring principles are fix'd to honour;
My virtue gathers force, my mind grows strong,

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I feel an honest confidence within,
A precious earnest of returning peace.

Ber. Who feels secure stands on the verge of ruin (*aside.*)
Trust me it joys my heart to see you thus:
What have I not attempted for your sake!
My love for you has warp'd my honest nature,
And friendship has infring'd on higher duties.

Orl. It was a generous fault.

Ber. Yet 'twas a fault.
Oh for a flinty heart that knows no weakness,
But moves right onward, unseduc'd by friendship,
And all the weak affections!

Orl. Hear me, Bertrand!
This is my last farewell; absence alone
Can prop my stagg'ring virtue.

Ber. You're resolv'd:
Then Julia's favours come too late:

Orl. What favours?

Ber. Nay, nothing: I renounce these weak affections;
They have misled us both. I too repent,
And will return the letter back to Julia.

Orl. Letter! what letter? Julia write to me?
I will not see it.—What would Rivers say?
Bertrand! he sav'd my life—I will not see it.

Ber. I do not mean you should; nay I refus'd
To bring it you.

Orl. Refus'd to bring the letter?

Ber. Yes, I refus'd at first:

Orl. Then thou *hast* brought it?
My faithful Bertrand!—Come.

Ber. 'Twere best not see it.

Orl. Not see it! how! not read my Julia's letter!
An empire should not bribe me to forbear.
Come, come.

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Ber. Alas how frail is human virtue!
My resolution melts, and though I mean not
To trust you with the letter, I must tell you
With what a thousand, thousand charms she gave it.
"Take this," said she, "and as Orlando reads it,
Attend to every accent of his voice;
Watch every little motion of his eye;
Mark if it sparkles when he talks of Julia;
If when he speaks, poor Julia be the theme;
If when he sighs his bosom heave for Julia:
Note every trifling act, each little look,
For, oh! of what importance is the least
To those who love like me!"

Orl. Delicious poison!
O how it taints my soul! give me the letter.

(BERTRAND *offers it*, ORLANDO *refuses*.)

Ha! where's the virtue which but now I boasted?
'Tis lost, 'tis gone—conflicting passions tear me.
I am again a villain.—Give it—no;
A spark of honour strikes upon my soul.
Take back the letter; take it back, good Bertrand!
Spite of myself compel me to be just:
I will not read it.

Ber. How your friend will thank you!
Another day makes Julia his forever.
Even now the great pavilion is prepar'd;
There will the nupital rites be solemniz'd.
Julia already dress'd in bridal robes,
Like some fair victim——

Orl. O no more, no more.
What can she write to me?

Ber. Some prudent counsel.

Orl. Then wherefore fear to read it? come, I'll venture:
What wondrous harm can one poor letter do?
The letter—quick—the letter.

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Ber. Since you force me. (*Gives it.*)

Orl. Be firm, ye shivering nerves! It is her hand.
(*Reads*) "To spare my blushes Bertrand brings you this.
How have you wrong'd me! you believ'd me false;
'Twas my compassion for your friend deceiv'd you.
Meet me at midnight in the great pavilion;
But shun till then my presence; from that hour
My future life is yours; your once-loved friend
I pity and esteem; but you alone
Possess the heart of Julia."

This to me!
I dream, I rave, 'tis all Elysium round me,
And thou, my better angel! this to me!

Ber. I'm dumb: oh Julia! what a fall is thine!

Orl. What, is it such a crime to love? away——
Thy moral comes too late; thou should'st have urg'd
Thy scruple sooner, or not urg'd at all;
Thou should'st—alas! I know not what I say—
But this I know, the charming Julia loves me,
Appoints a meeting at the dead of night!
She loves! The rest is all beneath my care.

Ber. Be circumspect; the hour is just at hand;
Since all is ready for your purpos'd parting,
See your attendants be dispos'd aright,
Near the pavilion gate.

Orl. Why so?

Ber. 'Tis plain
Julia must be the partner of your flight:
'Tis what she means, you must not mind her struggles;
A little gentle violence perhaps,
To make her yield to what she had resolv'd,
And save her pride; she'll thank you for it after.

Orl. Take her by force? I like not that; O Bertrand,
There is a mutinous spirit in my blood,
That wars against my conscience.—Tell my Julia
I will not fail to meet her.

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Ber. I obey.
Be near the garden I shall soon return.

[*Exit* BERTRAND.

Orl. This giant sin, whose bulk so lately scar'd me,
Shrinks to a common size; I now embrace
What I but lately fear'd to look upon.
Why, what a progress have I made in guilt!
Where is the hideous form it lately wore?
It grows familiar to me; I can think,
Contrive, and calmly meditate on mischief,
Talk temp'rately of sin, and cherish crimes
I lately so abhorr'd, that had they once
But glanc'd upon the surface of my fancy
I had been terrified. O wayward conscience!
Too tender for repose, too sear'd for safety!

[*Exit* ORLANDO.

Scene changes to another part of the garden—A grand pavilion—The moon shining.

Enter RIVERS *in a melancholy attitude.*

Riv. Ye lovely scenes of long remember'd bliss!
Scenes which I hop'd were fated to bestow
Still dearer blessings in a beauteous bride!
Thou gay pavilion, which art dress'd so fair
To witness my espousals, why, ah! why
Art thou adorn'd in vain? Yet still I court thee,
For Julia lov'd thee once:—dear faithless Julia!
Yet is she false? Orlando swore she was not:
It may be so; yet she avoids my presence,
Keeps close from every eye, but most from mine.

Enter ORLANDO.

Orl. Ha! Rivers here? would I had shunn'd his walks!
How shall I meet the man I mean to wrong?

Riv. Why does Orlando thus expose his health
To this cold air?

Orl. I ask the same of Rivers?

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Riv. Because this solitude, this silent hour
Feeds melancholy thoughts, and soothes my soul.
My Julia will not see me.

Orl. How?

Riv. She denies me
Admittance to her presence.

Orl. (*aside.*) Then I'm lost,
Confirm'd a villain, now 'tis plain she loves me.

Riv. She will not pardon me one single fault
Of jealous love, though thou hadst clear'd up all.

Orl. Wait till to-morrow, all will then be known.

Riv. Wait till to-morrow! Look at that pavilion;
All was prepar'd; yes, I dare tell thee all,
For thou art honest now.

Orl. (*aside.*) That wounds too deeply.

Riv. Soon as the midnight bell gave the glad summons,
This dear pavilion had beheld her mine.

Orl. All will be well to-morrow.—(*aside*)—If I stay
I shall betray the whole.——Good night, my Rivers.

Riv. Good night; go you to rest; I still shall walk.

[*Exit* ORLANDO.

Riv. Yes, I will trace her haunts; my too fond heart
Like a poor bird that's hunted from its nest,
Dares not return, and knows not where to fix;
Still it delights to hover round the spot
Which lately held its treasure; eyes it still,
And with heart-breaking tenderness surveys
The scene of joys which never may return. [*Exit.*

Scene changes to another part of the garden.

Re-enter ORLANDO.

Orl. Did he say rest? talk'd he of rest to me?
Can rest and guilt associate? but no matter,
I cannot now go back; then such a prize,
Such voluntary love, so fair, so yielding,
Would make archangels forfeit their allegiance!
I dare not think; reflection leads to madness.

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Enter BERTRAND.

Bertrand! I was not made for this dark work;
My heart recoils—poor Rivers!

Ber. What of Rivers?

Orl. I've seen him.

Ber. Where?

Orl. Before the great pavilion.

Ber. (*aside.*) That's lucky, saves me trouble; were he absent,
Half of my scheme had failed.

Orl. He's most unhappy;
He wish'd me rest, spoke kindly to me, Bertrand;
How, how can I betray him?

Ber. He deceives you;
He's on the watch, else wherefore now abroad
At this late hour? beware of treachery.

Orl. I am myself the traitor.

Ber. Come, no more!
The time draws near, you know the cypress walk,
'Tis dark.

Orl. The fitter for dark deeds like mine.

Ber. I have prepar'd your men; when the bell strikes
Go into the pavilion; there you'll find
The blushing maid, who with faint screams perhaps
Will feign resentment. But you want a sword.

Orl. A sword!—I'll murder no one—why a sword?

Ber. 'Tis prudent to be arm'd: no words, take mine:
There may be danger, Julia may be lost,
This night secures or loses her forever.
The cypress walk—spare none who look like spies.

Orl. (*looking at the sword.*) How deeply is that soul involv'd in guilt,
Who dares not hold communion with its thoughts,
Nor ask itself what it designs to do!
But dallies blindly with the gen'ral sin,
Of unexamin'd, undefin'd perdition!

[*Exit* ORLANDO.

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Ber. Thus far propitious fortune fills my sails;
Yet still I doubt his milkiness of soul;
My next exploit must be to find out Rivers,
And, as from Julia, give him a feign'd message,
To join her here at the pavilion gate;
There shall Orlando's well arm'd servants meet him,
And take his righteous soul from this bad world.
If they should fail, his honest cousin Bertrand
Will help him onward in his way to heav'n.
Then this good dagger, which I'll leave beside him,
Will, while it proves the deed, conceal the doer;
'Tis not an English instrument of mischief,
And who'll suspect *good Bertrand* wore a dagger?
To clear me further, I've no sword—unarm'd—
Poor helpless Bertrand! Then no longer poor,
But Guildford's heir, and lord of these fair lands.

[*Exit* BERTRAND.

Enter ORLANDO *on the other side.*

Orl. Draw thy dun curtain round, oh, night! black night!
Inspirer and concealer of foul crimes!
Thou wizard night! who conjur'st up dark thoughts,
And mak'st him bold who else would start at guilt!
Beneath thy veil the villain dares to act
What in broad day he would not dare to think.
Oh, night! thou hid'st the dagger's point from men,
But canst thou screen the assassin from himself?
Shut out the eye of heaven? extinguish conscience?
Or heal the wounds of honour? Oh, no, no, no!
Yonder she goes—the guilty, charming Julia!
My genius drives me on—Julia, I come. (*Runs off.*)

Scene—The Pavilion.

An arch'd door, through which JULIA *and her maid come forward on the stage.*

Julia. Not here? not come? look out my faithful Anna.
There was a time—oh, time forever dear!

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When Rivers would not make his Julia wait.
Perhaps he blames me, thinks the appointment bold,
Too daring, too unlike his bashful Julia;
But 'twas the only means my faithful love
Devis'd to save him from Orlando's rashness.
I have kept close, refus'd to see my Rivers;
Now all is still, and I have ventur'd forth,
With this kind maid and virtue for my guard.
Come, we'll go in, he cannot sure be long.

(*They go into the pavilion.*

Enter ORLANDO, *his sword drawn and bloody, his hair dishevelled.*

Orl. What have I done? a deed that earns damnation!
Where shall I fly? ah! the pavilion door!
'Tis open—it invites me to fresh guilt;
I'll not go in—let that fall'n angel wait,
And curse her stars as I do.
(*The midnight bell strikes.*) Hark! the bell!
Demons of darkness, what a peal is that!
Again! 'twill wake the dead—I cannot bear it!
'Tis terrible as the last trumpet's sound!
That was the marriage signal! Powers of hell,
What blessings have I blasted! Rivers!—Julia!

(JULIA *comes out.*)

Julia. My Rivers calls; I come, I come.—Orlando!
Orl. Yes,
Thou beautiful deceiver! 'tis that wretch.
Julia. That perjur'd friend.
Orl. That devil!
Julia. I'm betray'd.
Why art thou here?
Orl. Thou canst make ruin lovely,
Or I would ask, why didst thou bring me here.
Julia. I bring thee here?
Orl. Yes, thou, bright falsehood! thou.
Julia. No, by my hopes of heaven! where is my Rivers?
Some crime is meant.

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Orl. (*catches her hand.*) Julia! the crime is done.
Dost thou not shudder? art thou not amaz'd?
Art thou not cold and blasted with my touch?
Is not thy blood congeal'd? does no black horror
Fill thy presaging soul? look at these hands;
Julia! they're stain'd with blood; blood, Julia, blood!
Nay, look upon them.

Julia. Ah! I dare not.—Blood!

Orl. Yes, thou dear false one, with the noblest blood
That ever stain'd a dark assassin's hand.
Had not thy letter with the guilty message
To meet thee here this hour, blinded my honour,
And wrought my passion into burning frenzy,
Whole worlds should not have bribed me.

Julia. Letter and message?
I sent thee none.

Orl. Then Bertrand has betray'd me!
And I have done a deed beyond all reach,
All hope of mercy—I have murder'd Rivers.

Julia. Oh! (*She falls into her maid's arms.*)

Orl. O rich reward which Love prepares for murder!
Thus hell repays its instruments!

Enter GUILDFORD *with servants.*

Guil. Where is he?
Where is this midnight murderer? this assassin?
This is the place Orlando's servant nam'd.

Orl. The storm comes on. 'Tis Guildford, good old man!
Behold the wretch accurst of heaven and thee.

Guil. Accurst of both indeed. How, Julia fainting!

Orl. She's pure as holy truth; she was deceiv'd,
And so was I.

Guil. Who tempted thee to this?

Orl. Love, hell, and Bertrand.

Julia (*recovering.*) Give me back my Rivers;
I will not live without him.—Oh, my father!

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Guil. Father! I'm none; I am no more a father;
I have no child; my son is basely murder'd,
And my sweet daughter at the fatal news
Is quite bereft of reason.

Orl. Seize me, bind me:
If death's too great a mercy, let me live:
Drag me to some damp dungeon's horrid gloom,
Deep as the centre, dark as my offences;
Come, do your office, take my sword: oh, Bertrand,
Yet ere I perish, could it reach thy heart!

(*They seize* ORLANDO.)

Julia. I will not long survive thee, oh, my Rivers!

Enter RIVERS *with a dagger.*

Riv. Who calls on Rivers with a voice so sad,
So full of sweetness?

Guil. Ah, my son!

Julia. 'Tis he, 'tis he;

JULIA *and* RIVERS *run into each other's arms,* ORLANDO *breaks from the guards and falls on his knees.*

Orl. He lives, he lives! the god-like Rivers lives!
Hear it, ye host of heaven! witness, ye saints!
Recording angels, tell it in your songs;
Breathe it, celestial spirits, to your lutes,
That Rivers lives!

Julia. Explain this wond'rous happiness!

Riv. 'Twas Bertrand whom Orlando killed; the traitor,
Has with his dying breath confess'd the whole.

Orl. Good sword, I thank thee!

Riv. In the tangled maze
Orlando miss'd the path he was to take,
And pass'd through that where Bertrand lay conceal'd
To watch th' event: Orlando thought 'twas me,
And that I play'd him false: the walk was dark.
In Bertrand's bloody hand I found this dagger,
With which he meant to take my life; but how
Were you alarm'd?

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Guil. One of Orlando's men,
Whom wealth could never bribe to join in murder——
Orl. Murder! I bribe to murder?
Riv. No; 'twas Bertrand
Brib'd them to that curst deed: he lov'd my sister.
Orl. Exquisite villain?
Guil. Fly to Emmelina,
If any spark of reason yet remain,
Tell her the joyful news.—Alas, she's here!
Wildly she flies!—Ah, my distracted child!

Enter EMMELINA *distracted.*

Emm. Off, off! I will have way! ye shall not hold me:
I come to seek my lord; is he not here?
Tell me, ye virgins, have ye seen my love,
Or know you where his flocks repose at noon?
My love is comely—sure you must have seen him;
'Tis the great promiser! who vows and swears;
The perjur'd youth! who deals in oaths and breaks them.
In truth he might deceive a wiser maid.
I lov'd him once; he then was innocent;
He was no murderer then, indeed he was not;
He had not kill'd my brother.
Riv. Nor has he now;
Thy brother lives.
Emm. I know it—yes, he lives
Among the cherubim. Murd'rers too will live:
But where? I'll tell you where—down, down, down, down.
How deep it is! 'tis fathomless—'tis dark!
No—there's a pale blue flame—ah, poor Orlando!
Guil. My heart will burst.
Orl. Pierce mine, and that will ease it.
Emm. (*comes up to her father.*) I knew a maid who lov'd—but she was mad—
Fond foolish girl! Thank heav'n, I am not mad;
Yet the afflicting angel has been with me;
But do not tell my father, he would grieve;

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Sweet, good, old man—perhaps he'd weep to hear it:
I never saw my father weep but once;
I'll tell you when it was—I did not weep;
'Twas when—but soft, my brother must not know it,
'Twas when his poor fond daughter was refus'd.

Guil. Who can bear this?

Orl. I will not live to bear it.

Emm. (*comes up to Orlando.*) Take comfort, thou poor wretch! I'll not appear
Against thee, nor shall Rivers; but blood must,
Blood will appear; there's no concealing blood.
What's that? my brother's ghost—it vanishes;
(*Catches hold of Rivers.*)
Stay, take me with thee, take me to the skies;
I have thee fast; thou shalt not go without me.
But hold—may we not take the murd'rer with us?
That look says—No. Why then I'll not go with thee.
Yet hold me fast—'tis dark—I'm lost—I'm gone. (*Dies.*)

Orl. One crime makes many needful: this day's sin
Blots out a life of virtue. Good old man!
My bosom bleeds for thee; thy child is dead,
And I the cause. 'Tis but a poor atonement;
But I can make no other. (*Stabs himself.*)

Riv. What hast thou done?

Orl. Fill'd up the measure of my sins. Oh, mercy!
Eternal goodness, pardon this last guilt!
Rivers, thy hand!—farewell! forgive me, heaven!
Yet is it not an act which bars forgiveness,
And shuts the door of grace forever?—Oh! (*Dies.*)

(*The curtain falls to soft music.*)

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EPILOGUE.

WRITTEN BY R. B. SHERIDAN, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MR. LEE LEWES.

UNHAND me, gentlemen, by heaven, I say,
I'll make a ghost of him who bars my way.
[*Behind the scenes.*

Forth let me come—A Poetaster true,
As lean as Envy, and as baneful too;
On the dull audience let me vent my rage,
Or drive these female scribblers from the stage.
For scene or history, we've none but these,
The law of Liberty and Wit they seize;
In Tragic—Comic—Pastoral—they dare to please.
Each puny Bard must surely burst with spite,
To find that women with such fame can write:
But, oh, your partial favour is the cause,
Which feeds their follies with such full applause.
Yet still our tribe shall seek to blast their fame
And ridicule each fair pretender's aim;
Where the dull duties of domestic life,
Wage with the Muse's toils eternal strife.

What motley cares Corilla's mind perplex,
While maids and metaphors conspire to vex!
In studious dishabille behold her sit,
A letter'd gossip and a housewife wit;
At once invoking, though for different views,
Her gods, her cook, her milliner, and muse,
Round her strew'd room a frippery chaos lies,
A chequer'd wreck of notable and wise;
Bills, books, caps, couplets, combs, a vary'd mass,
Oppress the toilet, and obscure the glass;

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Unfinish'd here an epigram is laid,
And there, a mantuamaker's bill unpaid;
Here new-born plays foretaste the town's applause,
There, dormant patterns pine for future gauze;
A moral essay now is all her care,
A satire next, and then a bill of fare:
A scene she now projects, and now a dish,
Here's act the first---and here---remove with fish.
Now while this eye in a fine frenzy rolls,
That, soberly casts up a bill for coals;
Black pins and daggers in one leaf she sticks,
And tears, and thread, and balls, and thimbles mix.
Sappho, 'tis true, long vers'd in epic song,
For years esteem'd all household studies wrong;
When dire mishap, though neither shame nor sin,
Sappho, herself, and not her muse, lies in.
The virgin Nine in terror fly the bower,
And matron Juno claims despotic power;
Soon Gothic hags the classic pile o'erturn,
A caudle-cup supplants the sacred urn;
Nor books, nor implements escape their rage,
They spike the inkstand, and they rend the page;
Poems and plays one barbarous fate partake,
Ovid and Plautus suffer at the stake,
And Aristotle's only sav'd---to wrap plum-cake.
Yet, shall a woman tempt the tragic scene?
And dare---but hold---I must repress my spleen,
I see your hearts are pledg'd to her applause,
While Shakspeare's spirit seems to aid her cause;
Well pleas'd to aid---since o'er his sacred bier
A female hand did ample trophies rear,
And gave the greenest laurel that is worshipp'd there.

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THE

INFLEXIBLE CAPTIVE:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

As it was acted at the Theatre Royal at Bath.

The man resolv'd, and steady to his trust,
Inflexible to ill, and obstinately just.

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TO THE

HONOURABLE MRS. BOSCAWEN.

DEAR MADAM,

It seems somewhat extraordinary, that although with persons of great merit and delicacy, no virtue stands in higher estimation than truth; yet in such an address as the present, there would be some danger of offending them by a strict adherence to it: I mean by uttering truths so generally acknowledged, that every one except the person addressed would acquit the writer of flattery. And it will be a singular circumstance to see a dedication without praise, to a lady possessed of every quality and accomplishment which can justly entitle her to it. I am, dear madam,

With great respect, your most obedient,

And very obliged humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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THE ARGUMENT.

Among the great names which have done honour to antiquity in general, and to the Roman republic in particular, that of Marcus Attilius Regulus has, by the general consent of all ages, been considered as one of the most respectable, since he not only sacrificed his labours, his liberty, and his life for the good of his country, but by a greatness of soul, almost peculiar to himself, contrived to make his very misfortunes contribute to that glorious end.

After the Romans had met with various successes in the first Punic war, under the command of Regulus, victory at length declared for the opposite party, the Roman army was totally overthrown, and Regulus himself taken prisoner, by Xantippus, a Lacedemonian general in the service of the Carthaginians: the victorious enemy, exulting in so important a conquest, kept him many years in close imprisonment, and loaded him with the most cruel indignities. They thought it was now in their power to make their own terms with Rome, and determined to send Regulus thither, with their ambassador, to negociate a peace, or at least an exchange of captives, thinking he would gladly persuade his countrymen to discontinue a war, which necessarily prolonged his captivity. They previously exacted from him an oath to return should his embassy prove unsuccessful; at the same time giving him to understand, that he must expect to suffer a cruel death if he failed in it; this they artfully intimated as the strongest motive for him to leave no means unattempted to accomplish their purpose.

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At the unexpected arrival of this venerable hero the Romans expressed the wildest transports of joy, and would have submitted to almost any conditions to procure his enlargement; but Regulus, so far from availing himself of his influence with the senate to obtain any personal advantages, employed it to induce them to reject proposals so evidently tending to dishonour their country, declaring his fixed resolution to return to bondage and death, rather than violate his oath.

He at last extorted from them their consent; and departed amidst the tears of his family, the importunities of his friends, the applauses of the senate, and the tumultuous opposition of the people; and, as a great poet of his own nation beautifully observes, "he embarked for Carthage as calm and unconcerned, as if, on finishing the tedious lawsuits of his clients, he was retiring to Venafrian fields, or the sweet country of Tarentum."

☞ This piece is a pretty close imitation of the *Attilio Regolo* of Metastasio, but enlarged and extended into a tragedy of five acts. Historical truth has in general been followed, except in some less essential instances, particularly that of placing the return of Regulus to Rome posterior to the death of his wife. The writer herself never considered the plot as sufficiently bustling and dramatic for representation.

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PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY THE REV. DR. LANGHORNE.

Deep in the bosom of departed days,
Where the first gems of human glory blaze;
Where, crown'd with flowers, in wreaths immortal drest,
The sacred shades of ancient virtue rest;
With joy they search, who joy can feel, to find
Some honest reason still to love mankind.
There the fair foundress of the scene to-night,
Explores the paths that dignify delight;
The regions of the mighty dead pervades;
The Sybil she that leads us to the shades.
O may each blast of ruder breath forbear
To waft her light leaves on the ruthless air;
Since she, as heedless, strives not to maintain
This tender offspring of her teeming brain!
For this poor birth was no provision made,
A flower that sprung and languish'd in the shade.
On Avon's banks, forsaken and forlorn,
This careless mother left her elder born;
And though unlike what Avon hail'd of yore,
Those giant sons that Shakspeare's banners bore,
Yet may we yield this little offspring grace,
And love the last and least of such a race.
Shall the strong scenes, where senatorial Rome,
Mourn'd o'er the rigour of her patriot's doom;
Where melting Nature, aw'd by Virtue's eye,
Hid the big drop, and held the bursting sigh;
Where all that majesty of soul can give,
Truth, Honour, Pity, fair Affection live;
Shall scenes like these, the glory of an age,
Gleam from the press, nor triumph on the stage?
Forbid it, Britons! and, as Romans brave,
Like Romans boast one citizen to save.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

REGULUS.—Mr. HENDERSON.
PUBLIUS, his son.—Mr. DIMOND.
MANLIUS, the consul.—Mr. BLISSET.
LICINIUS, a tribune.—Mr. BROWN.
HAMILCAR, the Carthaginian ambassador. } Mr. ROWBOTHAM.

ATTILIA, daughter of Regulus.—Miss MANSELL.
BARCE, a Carthaginian captive.—Miss WHEELER.

Guards, lictors, people, &c.

Scene—Near the gates of Rome.

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THE INFLEXIBLE CAPTIVE.

ACT I.

Scene—A hall in the consul's palace.

Enter LICINIUS, ATTILIA, *lictors and people.*

Lic. ATTILIA waiting here? Is't possible!
Is this a place for Regulus's daughter?
Just gods! must that incomparable maid
Associate here with lictors and plebeians?

Att. Yes, on this threshold patiently I wait
The consul's coming; I would make him blush
To see me here his suitor. O Licinius,
This is no time for form and cold decorum;
Five lagging years have crept their tedious round,
And Regulus, alas! is still a slave;
A wretched slave, unpitied, and forgotten;
No other tribute paid his memory,
Than the sad tears of his unhappy child;
If *she* be silent, who will speak for Regulus?

Lic. Let not her sorrows make my fair unjust.
Is there in Rome a heart so dead to virtue
That does not beat in Regulus's cause?
That wearies not the gods for his return?
That does not think all subjugated Afric,
A slender, unimportant acquisition,
If, in return for this extended empire,
The freedom of thy father be the purchase?
These are the feelings of imperial Rome;

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My own, it were superfluous to declare.
For if *Licinius* were to weigh his merit,
That he's *thy father* were sufficient glory.
He was my leader, train'd me up to arms;
And if I boast a spark of Roman honour,
I owe it to *his* precepts and *his* virtues.

Att. And yet I have not seen Licinius stir.

Lic. Ah! spare me thy reproaches—what, when late
A private citizen, could I attempt?
'Twas not the lust of power, or pride of rank,
Which made me seek the dignity of tribune;
No, my Attilia, but I fondly hop'd
'Twould strengthen and enforce the just request,
Which as a *private* man I *vainly* urg'd;
But now, the people's representative,
I shall *demand*, Attilia, to be heard.

Att. Ah! let us not too hastily apply
This dang'rous remedy; I would not rouse
Fresh tumults 'twixt the people and the senate:
Each views with jealousy the idol, power,
Which, each possessing, would alike abuse.
What one demands the other still denies.
Might *I* advise you, try a *gentler* method;
I know that every moment Rome expects
Th' ambassador of Carthage, nay, 'tis said
The conscript fathers are already met
To give him audience in Bellona's temple.
There might the consul at my suit, Licinius,
Propose the ransom of my captive father.

Lic. Ah! think, Attilia, who that consul is,
Manlius, thy father's rival, and his foe:
His ancient rival, and his foe profess'd:
To hope in him, my fair, were fond delusion.

Att. Yet though his rival, Manlius is a *Roman:*
Nor will he think of private enmities,
Weigh'd in the balance with the good of Rome.

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Let me at least make trial of his honour.

Lic. Be it so, my fair! but elsewhere make thy suit;
Let not the consul meet Attilia *here*,
Confounded with the refuse of the people.

Att. Yes, I will see him *here*, e'en *here*, Licinius.
Let *Manlius* blush, not *me*: *Here* will I speak,
Here shall he answer me.

Lic. Behold he comes.

Att. Do thou retire.

Lic. O bless me with a look,
One parting look at least.

Att. Know, my Licinius,
That at this moment I am all the *daughter*,
The filial feelings now possess my soul,
And other passions find no entrance there.

Lic. O sweet, yet powerful influence of virtue,
That charms though cruel, though unkind subdues,
And what was love, exalts to admiration!
Yes, 'tis the privilege of souls like thine
To conquer most when least they aim at conquest.
Yet, ah! vouchsafe to think upon Licinius,
Nor fear to rob thy father of his due;
For surely virtue and the gods approve
Unwearied constancy and spotless love. [*Exit* LICINIUS.

Enter MANLIUS.

Att. Ah! Manlius, stay, a moment stay, and hear me.

Man. I did not think to meet thee here, Attilia;
The place so little worthy of the guest.

Att. It would indeed have ill become Attilia,
While still her father was a Roman citizen;
But for the daughter of a slave to Carthage,
It surely is most fitting.

Man. Say, Attilia,
What is the purpose of thy coming hither?

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Att. What is the purpose, patience, pitying Heaven!
Tell me, how long, to Rome's eternal shame,
To fill with horror all the wond'ring world,
My father still must groan in Punic chains,
And waste the tedious hours in cruel bondage?
Days follow days, and years to years succeed,
And Rome forgets her hero, is content
That Regulus be a forgotten slave.
What is his crime? is it that he preferr'd
His country's profit to his children's good?
Is it th' unshaken firmness of his soul,
Just, uncorrupt, and, boasting, let me speak it,
Poor in the highest dignities of Rome?
Illustrious crime! O glorious poverty!

Man. But know, Attilia———

Att. O have patience with me.
And can ungrateful *Rome* so soon forget?
Can those who breathe the air *he* breath'd forget
The great, the godlike virtues of my father?
There's not a part of Rome but speaks his praise.
The *streets*—thro' them the *hero* pass'd triumphant:
The *forum*—there the *legislator* plann'd
The wisest, purest laws—the senate house—
There spoke the *patriot Roman*—there his voice
Secur'd the public safety: Manlius, yes;
The wisdom of his councils match'd his valour.
Enter the *temples*—mount the *capitol*—
And tell me, Manlius, to what hand but *his*
They owe their trophies, and their ornaments,
Their foreign banners, and their boasted ensigns,
Tarentine, Punic, and Sicilian spoils?
Nay e'en those lictors who precede thy steps,
This consul's purple which invests thy limbs,
All, all were Regulus's, were my father's.
And yet this hero, this exalted patriot,
This man of virtue, this immortal Roman,

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In base requital for his services,
Is left to linger out a life in chains,
No honors paid him but a daughter's tears.
O Rome! O Regulus! O thankless citizens!

Man. Just are thy tears—Thy father well deserves them;
But know thy censure is unjust, Attilia.
The fate of Regulus is felt by all:
We know and mourn the cruel woes he suffers
From barbarous Carthage.

Att. Manlius, you mistake;
Alas! it is not Carthage which is barbarous;
'Tis Rome, ungrateful Rome, is the barbarian;
Carthage but punishes a foe profess'd,
But Rome betrays her hero and her father:
Carthage remembers how he slew her sons,
But Rome forgets the blood he shed for *her*.
Carthage revenges an acknowledged foe,
But Rome with basest perfidy rewards
The glorious hand that bound her brow with laurels!
Which now is the barbarian, Rome or Carthage?

Man. What can be done?

Att. A woman shall inform you.
Convene the senate; let them strait propose
A ransom, or exchange for Regulus,
To Africa's ambassador. Do this,
And heaven's best blessings crown your days with peace.

Man. Thou speakest like a *daughter*, I, Attilia
Must as a *consul* act; I must consult
The good of Rome, and with her good, her glory.
Would it not tarnish her unspotted fame,
To sue to Carthage on the terms thou wishest?

Att. Ah! rather own thou'rt still my father's foe.

Man. Ungen'rous maid! no fault of mine concurr'd

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To his destruction. 'Twas the chance of war.
Farewell! ere this the senate is assembled——
My presence is requir'd.——Speak to the fathers,
And try to soften *their* austerity;
My rigour they may render vain, for know,
I am Rome's *consul*, not her *king*, Attilia.

[*Exit* MANLIUS *with the lictors, &c.*

Att. (*alone.*) This flattering hope, alas! has prov'd abortive.
One consul is our foe, the other absent.
What shall the sad Attilia next attempt?
Suppose I crave assistance from the people!
Ah! my unhappy father, on what hazards,
What strange vicissitudes, what various turns,
Thy life, thy liberty, thy all depends!

Enter BARCE (*in haste.*)

Barce. Ah, my Attilia!
Att. Whence this eager haste?
Barce. Th' ambassador of Carthage is arriv'd.
Att. And why does *that* excite such wondrous transport?
Barce. I bring another cause of greater still.
Att. Name it, my Barce.
Barce. *Regulus* comes with him.
Att. My father! can it be?
Barce. Thy father——Regulus.
Att. Thou art deceiv'd, or thou deceiv'st thy friend.
Barce. Indeed I saw him not, but every tongue
Speaks the glad tidings.

Enter PUBLIUS.

Att. See where Publius comes.
Pub. My sister, I'm transported! Oh Attilia,
He's here, our father——Regulus is come!
Att. I thank you, gods: O my full heart! where is he?
Hasten, my brother, lead, O lead me to him.

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Pub. It is too soon: restrain thy fond impatience.
With Africa's ambassador he waits,
Until th' assembled senate give him audience.

Att. Where was he Publius when thou saw'st him first?

Pub. You know, in quality of Roman quæstor,
My duty 'tis to find a fit abode
For all ambassadors of foreign states.
Hearing the Carthaginian was arriv'd,
I hasten'd to the port, when, O just gods!
No foreigner, no foe, no African
Salutes my eye, but Regulus——my father!

Att. Oh mighty joy! too exquisite delight!
What said the hero? tell me, tell me all,
And ease my anxious breast.

Pub. Ere I arriv'd,
My father stood already on the shore,
Fixing his eyes with anxious eagerness,
As straining to descry the capitol.
I saw, and flew with transport to embrace him,
Pronounc'd with wildest joy the name of father—
With reverence seiz'd his venerable hand,
And would have kiss'd it; when the awful hero,
With that stern grandeur which made Carthage tremble,
Drew back—stood all collected in himself,
And said austerely—Know, thou rash young man,
That *slaves* in *Rome* have not the rights of *fathers.*
Then ask'd, if yet the senate was assembled,
And where? which having heard, without indulging
The fond effusions of his soul, or mine,
He suddenly retir'd. I flew with speed
To find the consul, but as yet, success
Attends not my pursuit. Direct me to him.

Bar. Publius, you'll find him in Bellona's temple.

Att. Then Regulus returns to Rome a slave!

Pub. Yes, but be comforted; I know he brings

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Proposals for a peace; his will's his fate.

Att. Rome may perhaps refuse to treat of peace.

Pub. Didst thou behold the universal joy
At his return, thou would'st not doubt success.
There's not a tongue in Rome but, wild with transport,
Proclaims aloud that Regulus is come!
The streets are filled with thronging multitudes,
Pressing with eager gaze to catch a look.
The happy man who can descry him first,
Points him to his next neighbour, he to his;
Then what a thunder of applause goes round;
What music to the ear of filial love!
Attilia! not a Roman eye was seen,
But shed pure tears of exquisite delight.
Judge of my feelings by thy own, my sister.
By the large measure of thy fond affection,
Judge mine.

Att. Where is Licinius? find him out;
My joy is incomplete till he partakes it.
When doubts and fears have rent my anxious heart,
In all my woes he kindly bore a part:
Felt all my sorrows with a soul sincere,
Sigh'd as I sigh'd, and number'd tear for tear:
Now favouring heav'n my ardent vows has blest;
He shall divide the *transports* of my breast.

[*Exit* ATTILIA.

Pub. Barce, adieu!

Bar. Publius, a moment hear me.
Know'st thou the name of Africa's ambassador?

Pub. Hamilcar.

Bar. Son of Hanno?

Pub. Yes! the same.

Bar. Ah me! Hamilcar!—How shall I support it!
(*aside.*)

Pub. Ah, charming maid! the blood forsakes thy cheek:

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Is he the rival of thy Publius? speak,
And tell me all the rigour of my fate:

Bar. Hear me, my lord. Since I have been thy slave,
Thy goodness, and the friendship of Attilia,
Have soften'd all the horrors of my fate.
Till now I have not felt the weight of bondage.
Till now—ah, Publius!—think me not ungrateful,
I would not wrong thee—I will be sincere—
I will expose the weakness of my soul.
Know then, my lord—how shall I tell thee all?

Pub. Stop, cruel maid, nor wound thy Publius more;
I dread the fatal frankness of thy words:
Spare me the pain of knowing I am scorn'd;
And if thy heart's devoted to another,
Yet do not tell it me; in tender pity
Do not, my fair, dissolve the fond illusion,
The dear delightful visions I have form'd
Of future joy, and fond exhaustless love.

[*Exit* PUBLIUS.

Bar. (*alone.*) And shall I see him then, see my Hamilcar,
Pride of my soul, and lord of all my wishes?
The only man in all our burning Afric
Who ever taught my bosom how to love!
Down, foolish heart! be calm, my busy thoughts!
If at his name I feel these strange emotions,
How shall I see, how meet my conqueror?
O let not those presume to judge of joy
Who ne'er have felt the pangs which absence gives.
Such tender transport those alone can prove,
Who long, like me, have known disastrous Love;
The tears that fell, the sighs that once were paid,
Like grateful incense on his altar laid;
The lambent flame rekindle, not destroy,
And woes remember'd heighten present joy. [*Exit.*

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ACT II.

Scene—The inside of the temple of Bellona—Seats for the senators and ambassadors—lictors guarding the entrance.

MANLIUS, PUBLIUS, *and Senators.*

Man. LET Regulus be sent for to our presence;
And with him the ambassador of Carthage.
Is it then true the foe would treat of peace?
Pub. They wish at least our captives were exchang'd,
And send my father to declare their wish:
If he obtain it, well: if not, then Regulus
Returns to meet the vengeance of the foe,
And pay for your refusal with his blood:
He ratified this treaty with his oath,
And, 'ere he quitted Carthage, heard, unmov'd,
The dreadful preparations for his death,
Should he return. O Romans! O my countrymen!
Can you resign your hero to your foe?
Say, can you give up Regulus to Carthage?
Man. Peace, Publius, peace, for see thy father comes.

Enter HAMILCAR *and* REGULUS.

Ham. Why dost thou stop? dost thou forget this temple?
I thought these walls had been well known to Regulus!
Reg. Hamilcar! I was thinking what I was
When last I saw them, and what now I am.
Ham. (*to the consul.*) Carthage by me to Rome this greeting sends,
That wearied out at length with bloody war,
If Rome inclines to peace she offers it.
Man. We will at leisure answer thee. Be seated.
Come, Regulus, resume thine ancient place.
Reg. (*pointing to the senators.*) Who then are these?

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Man. The senators of Rome.

Reg. And who art thou?

Man. What mean'st thou? I'm her consul;
Hast thou so soon forgotten Manlius?

Reg. And shall a *slave* then have a place in Rome,
Among her consuls and her senators?

Man. Yes!—For her *heroes* Rome forgets her *laws;*
Softens their harsh austerity for thee,
To whom she owes her conquests and her triumphs.

Reg. Rome may forget, but Regulus remembers.

Man. Was ever man so obstinately good? (*aside.*)

Pub. (*rising.*) Fathers! your pardon. I can sit no longer— (*to the senators.*)

Reg. Publius, what dost thou mean?

Pub. To do my duty:
Where Regulus must stand, shall Publius sit?

Reg. Alas! O Rome, how are thy manners chang'd!
When last I left thee, 'ere I sail'd for Afric,
It was a crime to think of private duties
When public cares requir'd attention.——Sit,
(To Publius.) And learn to occupy thy place with honour.

Pub. Forgive me, sir, if I refuse obedience:
My heart o'erflows with duty to my father.

Reg. Know, Publius, that duty's at an end;
Thy father died when he became a slave.

Man. Now urge thy suit, Hamilcar, we attend.

Ham. Afric hath chosen Regulus her messenger,
In him, both Carthage and Hamilcar speak.

Man. (*to Regulus.*) We are prepar'd to hear thee.

Ham. (*to Regulus.*) 'Ere thou speak'st,
Maturely weigh what thou hast sworn to do,
Should Rome refuse to treat with us of peace.

Reg. What I have sworn I will fulfil, Hamilcar.
Be satisfied.

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Pub. Ye guardian gods of Rome,
With your own eloquence inspire him now!
Reg. Carthage by me this embassy has sent:
If Rome will leave her undisturb'd possession
Of all she now enjoys, she offers *peace;*
But if you rather wish protracted war,
Her next proposal is, *exchange of captives;*——
If you demand advice of *Regulus,*
Reject them both.——
Ham. What dost thou mean?
Pub. My father!
Man. Exalted fortitude! I'm lost in wonder (*aside.*)
Reg. Romans! I will not idly spend my breath,
To show the dire effects of such a peace;
The foes, who beg it, show their dread of war.
Man. But the exchange of prisoners thou proposest?
Reg. That artful scheme conceals some Punic fraud.
Ham. Roman, beware! hast thou so soon forgotten?
Reg. I will fulfil the treaty I have sworn to.
Pub. All will be ruin'd.
Reg. Conscript fathers! hear me.——
Though this exchange teems with a thousand ills,
Yet, 'tis th' example I would deprecate.
This treaty fix'd, Rome's honour is no more.
Should her degenerate sons be promis'd life,
Dishonest life, and worthless liberty,
Her glory, valour, military pride,
Her fame, her fortitude, her all were lost.
What honest captive of them all would wish
With shame to enter her imperial gates,
The flagrant scourge of slavery on his back?
None, none, my friends, would wish a fate so vile,
But those base cowards who resign'd their arms,
Unstain'd with hostile blood, and poorly sued,
Through ignominious fear of death, for bondage;
The scorn, the laughter of th' insulting foe.

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O shame! shame! shame! eternal infamy!

Man. However hurtful this *exchange* may be,
The liberty, the life of Regulus,
More than compensates for it.

Reg. Thou art mistaken.——
This Regulus is a mere mortal man,
Yielding apace to all th' infirmities
Of weak, decaying nature.——I am old,
Nor can my future, feeble services
Assist my country much; but mark me well:
The young fierce heroes you'd restore to Carthage,
In lieu of this old man, are her chief bulwarks.
Fathers! in vig'rous youth this well-strung arm
Fought for my country, fought and conquer'd for her:
That was the time to prize its service high.
Now, weak and nerveless, let the foe possess it,
For it can harm them in the field no more.
Let Carthage have the poor, degrading triumph
To close these failing eyes;—but, O my countrymen!
Check their vain hopes, and show aspiring Afric
That heroes are the common growth of Rome.

Man. Unequall'd fortitude.

Pub. O fatal virtue!

Ham. What do I hear? this constancy confounds me.

Man. (*to the senators.*) Let honour be the spring of all our actions,
Not interest, fathers. Let no selfish views
Preach safety at the price of truth and justice.

Reg. If Rome would thank me, I will teach her how.
—Know, fathers, that these savage Africans
Thought me so base, so very low of soul,
That the poor wretched privilege of breathing,
Would force me to betray my country to them.
Have these barbarians any tortures left,
To match the cruelty of such a thought?
Revenge me, fathers! and I'm still a Roman.

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Arm, arm yourselves, prepare your citizens,
Snatch your imprison'd eagles from their fanes,
Fly to the shores of Carthage, force her gates,
Dye every Roman sword in Punic blood—
And do such deeds—that when I shall return
(As I have *sworn*, and am resolv'd to do)
I may behold with joy reflected back,
The terrors of your rage in the dire visages
Of my astonish'd executioners.

Ham. Surprise has chill'd my blood! I'm lost in wonder!

Pub. Does no one answer? must my father perish?

Man. Romans, we must defer th' important question;
Maturest councils must determine on it.
Rest we awhile:——Nature requires some pause
From high rais'd admiration. Thou, Hamilcar,
Shalt shortly know our final resolution.
Meantime, we go to supplicate the gods.

Reg. Have you a doubt remaining! Manlius, speak.

Man. Yes, Regulus, I think the danger less
To lose th' advantage thy advice suggests,
Than would accrue to Rome in losing thee,
Whose wisdom might direct, whose valour guard her.
Athirst for glory thou wouldst rush on death,
And for thy country's sake wouldst greatly perish.
Too vast a sacrifice thy zeal requires,
For Rome must bleed when Regulus expires.

[*Exeunt Consul and Senators.*

Manent REGULUS, PUBLIUS, HAMILCAR; *to them enter* ATTILIA *and* LICINIUS.

Ham. Does Regulus fulfil his promise thus?

Reg. I've promis'd to return, and I will do it.

Att. My father! think a moment.

Lic. Ah! my friend!

Lic. and Att. O by this hand we beg—

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Reg. Away! no more.
Thanks to Rome's guardian gods I'm yet a slave!
And will be still a slave to make Rome free!

Att. Was the exchange refus'd? Oh ease my fears.

Reg. Publius! conduct Hamilcar and myself
To the abode thou hast for each provided.

Att. A foreign residence? a strange abode?
And will my father spurn his household gods?

Pub. My sire a stranger?—Will he taste no more
The smiling blessings of his cheerful home?

Reg. Dost thou not know the laws of Rome forbid
A foe's ambassador within her gates?

Pub. This rigid law does not extend to thee,

Reg. Yes; did it not alike extend to all,
'Twere tyranny.—The law rights every man,
But favours none.

Att. Then, O my father,
Allow thy daughter to partake thy fate!

Reg. Attilia! no. The present exigence
Demands far other thoughts, than the soft cares,
The fond effusions, the delightful weakness,
The dear affections 'twixt the child and parent.

Att. How is my father chang'd from what I've known him!

Reg. The fate of Regulus is chang'd, not Regulus.
I am the same; in laurels or in chains
'Tis the same principle; the same fix'd soul,
Unmov'd itself, though circumstances change.
The native vigour of the free-born mind,
Still struggles with, still conquers adverse fortune:
Soars above chains, invincible though vanquish'd.

[*Exeunt* REGULUS *and* PUBLIUS.

ATTILIA, HAMILCAR *going*, *enter* BARCE.

Barce. Ah! my Hamilcar.

Ham. Ah! my long-lost Barce:
Again I lose thee; Regulus rejects

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Th' exchange of prisoners Africa proposes.
My heart's too full.—Oh I have much to say!

Barce. Yet you unkindly leave me, and say nothing.

Ham. Ah! didst thou love as thy Hamilcar loves,
Words were superfluous; in my eyes, my Barce,
Thou'dst read the tender eloquence of love,
Th' uncounterfeited language of my heart.
A single look betrays the soul's soft feelings,
And shows imperfect speech of little worth.

[*Exit* HAMILCAR.

Atti. My father then conspires his own destruction.
Is it not so?

Barce. Indeed I fear it much;
But as the senate has not yet resolv'd,
There is some room for hope: loose not a moment;
And, ere the conscript fathers are assembled,
Try all the powers of winning eloquence,
Each gentle art of feminine persuasion,
The love of kindred and the faith of friends,
To bend the rigid Romans to thy purpose.

Atti. Yes, Barce, I will go; I will exert
My little pow'r, though hopeless of success.
Undone Attilia! fall'n from hope's gay heights
Down the dread precipice of deep despair.
So some tir'd mariner the coast espies,
And his lov'd home explores with straining eyes;
Prepares with joy to quit the treacherous deep,
Hush'd every wave, and every wind asleep;
But ere he lands upon the well known shore,
Wild storms arise, and furious billows roar,
Tear the fond wretch from all his hopes away,
And drive his shatter'd bark again to sea.

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ACT III.

Scene—A portico of a palace without the gates of Rome—The abode of the Carthaginian ambassador.

Enter REGULUS *and* PUBLIUS *meeting.*

Reg. Ah! Publius here at such a time as this?
Know'st thou th' important question that the senate
This very hour debate?—Thy country's glory,
Thy father's honour, and the public good?
Dost thou know this and fondly linger here?
Pub. They're not yet met, my father.
Reg. Haste—away—
Support my counsel in th' assembled senate,
Confirm their wav'ring virtue by thy courage,
And Regulus shall glory in his boy.
Pub. Ah! spare thy son the most ungrateful task.
What! supplicate the ruin of my father?
Reg. The good of Rome can never hurt her sons.
Pub. In pity to thy children, spare thyself.
Reg. Dost thou then think that mine's a frantic bravery?
That Regulus would rashly seek his fate?
Publius! how little dost thou know thy sire?——
Misjudging youth! learn, that like *other* men,
I shun the *evil*, and I seek the *good;*
But *that* I find in *guilt*, and *this* in *virtue.*
Were it not guilt, guilt of the blackest dye,
Even to *think* of freedom at th' expense
Of my dear bleeding country? to me, therefore,
Freedom and life would be the heaviest evils;
But to preserve that country, to restore her,
To heal her wounds though at the price of *life*,
Or what is dearer far, the price of liberty,

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Is *virtue*—therefore slavery and death,
Are Regulus's good—his wish—his choice.

Pub. Yet sure our country——

Reg. Is a *whole*, my Publius,
Of which we all are *parts;* nor should a citizen
Regard *his* interests as distinct from *hers;*
No hopes or fears should touch his patriot soul,
But what affect *her* honour or *her* shame.
E'en when in hostile fields he *bleeds* to save her,
'Tis not *his* blood he loses, 'tis his *country's;*
He only pays her back a debt he owes.
To *her* he's bound for birth and education:
Her *laws* secure him from *domestic* feuds;
And from the *foreign* foe her *arms* protect him.
She lends him honours, dignity, and rank,
His wrongs revenges, and his merit pays;
And like a tender and indulgent mother,
Loads him with comforts, and would make his state
As blest as nature and the gods design'd it.
Such gifts, my son, have their alloy of *pain*,
And let th' unworthy wretch, who will not bear
His portion of the *public burden*, lose
Th' *advantages* it yields—let him retire
From the dear blessings of a social life,
And from the sacred laws which guard those blessings;
Renounce the civiliz'd abodes of man,
With kindred brutes one common shelter seek
In horrid wilds, and dens, and dreary caves,
And with their shaggy tenants share the spoil;
Or if the savage hunters miss their prey,
From scatter'd acorns pick a scanty meal—
Far from the sweet civilities of life;
There let him live, and vaunt his wretched freedom:
While we, obedient to the laws that guard us,
Guard *them*, and live or die as they decree.

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Pub. With reverence and astonishment I hear thee!
Thy words, my father, have convinc'd my reason,
But cannot touch my heart—nature denies
Obedience so repugnant. I'm a son.

Reg. A poor excuse, unworthy of a Roman!
Brutus, Virginius, Manlius—they were fathers.

Pub. 'Tis true, they were; but this heroic greatness,
This glorious elevation of the soul,
Has been confin'd to fathers.—Rome, till now,
Boasts not a son of such unnatural virtue,
Who spurning all the powerful ties of blood,
Has labour'd to procure his father's death.

Reg. Then be the first to give the great example—
Go, hasten, be thyself that son, my Publius.

Pub. My father! ah!

Reg. Publius, no more; begone—
Attend the senate—let me know my fate,
'Twill be more glorious if announc'd by thee.

Pub. Too much, too much thy rigid virtue claims
From thy unhappy son. Oh nature, nature!

Reg. Publius! am I a stranger, or thy father?
In either case an obvious duty waits thee;
If thou regard'st me as an alien here,
Learn to prefer to mine the good of Rome:
If as a father—reverence my commands.

Pub. Ah! could'st thou look into my inmost soul,
And see how warm it burns with love and duty,
Thou would'st abate the rigour of thy words.

Reg. Could I explore the secrets of thy breast,
The virtue I would wish should flourish there
Were fortitude, not weak, complaining love.

Pub. If thou requir'st my *blood*, I'll shed it all;
But when thou dost injoin the harsher task
That I should labour to procure thy death,
Forgive thy son—he has not so much virtue.

[*Exit* PUBLIUS.

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Reg. Th' important hour draws on, and now my soul
Loses her wonted calmness, lest the senate
Should doubt what answer to return to Carthage.
O ye protecting deities of Rome!
Ye guardian gods! look down propitious on her,
Inspire her senate with your sacred wisdom,
And call up all that's Roman in their souls!

Enter MANLIUS (*speaking.*)

See that the lictors wait, and guard the entrance—
Take care that none intrude.

Reg. Ah! Manlius here?
What can this mean?

Man. Where, where is Regulus?
The great, the god-like, the invincible?
Oh let me strain the hero to my breast.

Reg. (*avoiding him.*) Manlius, stand off, remember
I'm a slave!
And thou Rome's consul.

Man. I am something more:
I am a man enamour'd of thy virtues;
Thy fortitude and courage have subdued me.
I *was* thy *rival*—I am *now* thy *friend;*
Allow me that distinction, dearer far
Than all the honours Rome can give without it.

Reg. This is the temper still of noble minds,
And these the blessings of an humble fortune.
Had I not been a *slave*, I ne'er had gain'd
The treasure of thy friendship.

Man. I confess,
Thy grandeur cast a veil before my eyes,
Which thy reverse of fortune has remov'd!
Oft have I seen thee on the day of triumph,
A conqueror of nations enter Rome;
Now, thou hast conquer'd *fortune*, and *thyself*.
Thy laurels oft have mov'd my soul to envy,
Thy chains awaken my respect, my reverence;

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Then Regulus appear'd a *hero* to me,
He rises now a god.

Reg. Manlius, enough.
Cease thy applause; 'tis dang'rous; praise like thine
Might tempt the most severe and cautious virtue.
Bless'd be the gods, who gild my latter days
With the bright glory of the consul's friendship!

Man. Forbid it Jove! said'st thou thy *latter* days?
May gracious heav'n to a far distant hour
Protract thy valued life. Be it *my* care
To crown the hopes of thy admiring country,
By giving back her long lost hero to her.
I will exert my power to bring about
Th' exchange of captives Africa proposes!

Reg. Manlius, and is it thus, is this the way
Thou dost begin to give me proofs of friendship?
Ah! if thy love be so destructive to me,
What would thy hatred be? Mistaken consul!
Shall I then lose the profit of my wrongs?
Be thus *defrauded* of the benefit
I vainly hop'd from all my years of *bondage?*
I did not come to show my chains to Rome,
To move my country to a weak compassion;
I came to save her *honour,* to preserve her
From tarnishing her glory; came to snatch her
From offers so destructive to her fame.
O Manlius! either give me proofs more worthy
A Roman's friendship, or renew thy hate.

Man. Dost thou not know, that this exchange refus'd,
Inevitable death must be thy fate?

Reg. And has the name of *death* such terror in it,
To strike with dread the mighty soul of Manlius?
'Tis not *to-day* I learn that I am mortal.
The foe can only take from Regulus
What wearied nature would have shortly yielded;
It will be now a voluntary gift,

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'Twould then become a tribute seiz'd, not offer'd.
Yes, Manlius, tell the world that as I liv'd
For Rome alone, when I could live no longer,
'Twas my last care how, dying, to assist,
To save that country I had liv'd to serve.

Man. O unexampled worth! O god-like Regulus!
Thrice happy Rome! unparalleled in heroes!
Hast thou then sworn, thou awfully good man!
Never to bless the consul with thy friendship!

Reg. If thou wilt love me, love me like a *Roman.*
These are the terms on which I take thy friendship.
We both must make a sacrifice to Rome,
I of my life, and thou of *Regulus:*
One must resign his being, one his friend.
It is but just, that what procures our country
Such real blessings, such substantial good,
Should cost thee something—I shall lose but little.
Go then, my friend! but promise, ere thou goest,
With all the consular authority,
Thou wilt support my counsel in the senate.
If thou art willing to accept these terms,
With transport I embrace thy proffer'd friendship.

Man. (*after a pause.*) Yes, I do promise.

Reg. Bounteous gods, I thank you!
Ye never gave, in all your round of blessing,
A gift so greatly welcome to my soul,
As Manlius's friendship on the terms of honour!

Man. Immortal Powers! why am not I a slave!
By heav'n! I almost envy thee thy bonds.

Reg. My friend! there's not a moment to be lost;
Ere this perhaps the senate is assembled.
To thee, and to thy virtues, I commit
The dignity of Rome—my peace and honour.

Man. Illustrious man, farewell!

Reg. Farewell, my friend!

Man. The sacred flame thou hast kindled in my soul,

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Glows in each vein, trembles in every nerve,
And raises me to something more than man.
My blood is fired with virtue, and with Rome,
And every pulse beats an alarm to glory.
Who would not spurn a sceptre when compar'd
With chains like thine? Thou man of every virtue,
O farewell! may all the gods protect and bless thee.

[*Exit* MANLIUS.

Enter LICINIUS.

Reg. Now I begin to live: Propitious heaven
Inclines to favour me.——Licinius here?

Licin. With joy, my honour'd friend, I seek thy presence.

Reg. And why with joy?

Licin. Because my heart once more
Beats high with flattering hope. In thy great cause
I have been labouring.

Reg. Say'st thou in *my* cause?

Licin. In thine and Rome's. Does it excite thy wonder?
Could'st thou then think so poorly of Licinius,
That base ingratitude could find a place
Within his bosom?—Can I then forget
Thy thousand acts of friendship to my youth.
Forget them too at that important moment
When most I might assist thee?—Regulus,
Thou wast my leader, general, father—all.
Didst thou not teach me early how to tread
The path of glory; point the way thyself,
And bid me follow thee?

Reg. But say, Licinius,
What hast thou done to serve me?

Licin. I have defended
Thy liberty and life!

Reg. Ah! speak—explain.—

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Licin. Just as the fathers were about to meet,
I hasten'd to the temple—at the entrance
Their passage I retarded, by the force
Of strong entreaty; then address'd myself
So well to each, that I from each obtain'd
A declaration, that his utmost power
Should be exerted for thy life and freedom.

Reg. Great gods! what do I hear? Licinius too?

Licin. Not he alone; no, 'twere indeed unjust
To rob the fair Attilia of her claim
To filial merit.—What I could, I did.
But *she*—thy charming daughter—Heav'n and earth,
What did she not to save her father?

Reg. Who?

Licin. Attilia, thy belov'd—thy age's darling!
Was ever father bless'd with such a child!
Gods! how her looks took captive all who saw her!
How did her soothing eloquence subdue
The stoutest hearts of Rome! How did she rouse
Contending passions in the breasts of all!
How sweetly temper dignity with grief!
With what a soft, inimitable grace
She prais'd, reproach'd, entreated, flatter'd, sooth'd.

Reg. What said the senators?

Licin. What could they say?
Who could resist the lovely conqueror?
See where she comes—Hope dances in her eyes,
And lights up all her beauties into smiles.

Enter ATTILIA.

Atti. Once more, my dearest father——

Reg. Ah, presume not
To call me by that name. For know, Attilia,
I number *thee* among the foes of Regulus.

Atti. What do I hear? thy foe? my father's foe?

Reg. His worst of foes—the murd'rer of his glory.

Atti. Ah! is it then a proof of enmity

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To wish thee all the good the gods can give thee,
To yield my life, if needful, for thy service?

Reg. Thou rash, imprudent girl! thou little know'st
The dignity and weight of public cares.
Who made a weak and inexperienc'd *woman*
The arbiter of Regulus's fate?

Licin. For pity's sake, my lord!

Reg. Peace, peace, young man!
Her silence better than thy language pleads.
That bears at least the semblance of repentance.
Immortal Powers!—a daughter and a Roman!

Atti. Because I *am* a daughter, I presum'd——

Licin. Because I *am* a Roman, I aspired
T' oppose th' inhuman rigour of thy fate.

Reg. No more, Licinius. How can he be call'd
A Roman who would live with infamy?
Or how can she be Regulus's daughter
Whose coward mind wants fortitude and honour?
Unhappy children! now you make me *feel*
The burden of my chains: your feeble souls
Have made me know I am indeed a slave.

[*Exit* REGULUS.

Atti. Tell me, Licinius, and oh! tell me truly,
If thou believ'st in all the round of time
There ever breath'd a maid so truly wretched?
To weep, to mourn a father's cruel fate—
To love him with soul-rending tenderness—
To know no peace by day or rest by night—
To bear a bleeding heart in this poor bosom,
Which aches, and trembles but to think he suffers;
This is my crime—in any other child
'Twould be a merit.

Licin. Oh! my best Attilia,
Do not repent thee of the pious deed:
It was a virtuous error. *That* in *us*
Is a just duty, which the god-like soul

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Of Regulus would think a shameful weakness.
If the contempt of life in him be virtue,
It were in us a crime to let him perish.
Perhaps at last he may consent to live:
He then will thank us for our cares to save him:
Let not his anger fright thee. Though our love
Offend him now, yet, when his mighty soul
Is reconcil'd to life, he will not chide us.
The sick man loaths, and with reluctance takes
The remedy by which his health's restor'd.

Atti. Licinius! his reproaches wound my soul,
I cannot live and bear his indignation.

Licin. Would my Attilia, rather lose her father
Than, by offending him, preserve his life?

Atti. Ah! no. If he but live, I am contented.

Licin. Yes, he shall live, and we again be bless'd:
Then dry thy tears, and let those lovely orbs
Beam with their wonted lustre on Licinius,
Who lives but in the sunshine of thy smiles.

[*Exit* LICINIUS.

Atti. (*alone.*) O Fortune, fortune, thou capricious goddess!
Thy frowns and favours have alike no bounds:
Unjust, or prodigal in each extreme.
When thou would'st humble human vanity,
By singling out a wretch to bear thy wrath,
Thou crushest him with anguish to excess.
If thou would'st *bless*, thou mak'st the happiness
Too poignant for his giddy sense to bear.——
Immortal gods, who rule the fates of men,
Preserve my father! bless him, bless him, Heav'n!
If your avenging thunderbolts *must* fall,
Strike *here*—this bosom will invite the blow,
And *thank* you for it: but in mercy spare,
Oh! spare *his* sacred, venerable head:
Respect in *him* an image of yourselves;

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And leave a world, who wants it, an example
Of courage, wisdom, constancy, and truth.
Yet if, Eternal Powers who rule this ball!
You have decreed that Regulus must fall;
Teach me to yield to your divine command,
And meekly bow to your correcting hand;
Contented to resign, or pleas'd receive
What wisdom may withhold, or mercy give.

[*Exit* ATTILIA.

ACT IV.

Scene—A gallery in the ambassador's palace.

Reg. (*alone.*) BE calm, my soul! what strange emotions shake thee?
Emotions thou hast never felt till now.
Thou hast defied the dangers of the deep,
Th' impetuous hurricane, the thunder's roar,
And all the terrors of the various war;
Yet, now thou tremblest, fearful and dismay'd,
With anxious expectation of thy fate.——
Yes—thou hast amplest reason for thy fears;
For till this hour, so pregnant with events,
Thy fame and glory never were at stake.
Soft—let me think—what is this thing call'd *glory?*
'Tis the soul's tyrant, that should be dethron'd,
And learn subjection like her other passions!
Ah! no! 'tis false; this is the coward's plea;
The lazy language of refining vice.
That man was born in vain, whose wish to serve,
Is circumscrib'd within the wretched bounds
Of *self*—a narrow miserable sphere!
Glory exalts, enlarges, dignifies,
Absorbs the *selfish* in the *social* claims,

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And renders man a blessing to mankind.—
It is this principle, this spark of deity,
Rescues debased humanity from guilt,
And elevates it by her strong excitements.—
It takes off sensibility from pain,
From peril, fear; plucks out the sting from death;
Changes ferocious into gentle manners;
And teaches men to imitate the gods.
It shows——but see, alas! where Publius comes.
Ah! he advances with a downcast eye,
And step irresolute——

Enter PUBLIUS.

Reg. My Publius, welcome!
What tidings dost thou bring? what says the senate?
Is yet my fate determin'd? quickly tell me.—

Pub. I cannot speak, and yet, alas! I must.

Reg. Tell me the whole.—

Pub. Would I were rather dumb!

Reg. Publius, no more delay:—I charge thee speak.

Pub. The senate has decreed you shall depart.

Reg. Blest spirit of Rome! thou hast at last prevail'd—
I thank the gods, I have not liv'd in vain!
Where is Hamilcar?—find him—let us go,
For Regulus has nought to do in Rome;
I have accomplish'd her important work,
And must depart.

Pub. Ah, my unhappy father!

Reg. *Unhappy*, Publius! didst thou say *unhappy*?
Does he, does that blest man deserve this name
Who, to his latest breath, can serve his country?

Pub. Like thee, my father, I adore my country,
Yet weep with anguish o'er thy cruel chains.

Reg. Dost thou not know that *life*'s a slavery?
The body is the chain that binds the soul;
A yoke that every mortal must endure.
Would'st thou lament—lament the general fate,

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The chain that nature gives, entail'd on all,
Not these *I* wear.

Pub. Forgive, forgive my sorrows:
I know, alas! too well those fell barbarians
Intend thee instant death.

Reg. So shall my life
And servitude together have an end.——
Publius, farewell! nay do not follow me.

Pub. Alas! my father, if thou ever lov'dst me,
Refuse me not the mournful consolation
To pay the last sad offices of duty
I e'er can show thee.——

Reg. No!—thou can'st fulfil
Thy duty to thy father in a way
More grateful to him: I must strait embark.
Be it meanwhile thy pious care to keep
My lov'd Attilia from a sight, I fear,
Would rend her gentle heart.—Her tears, my son,
Would dim the glories of thy father's triumph.
Her sinking spirits are subdu'd by grief,
And should her sorrows pass the bounds of reason,
Publius, have pity on her tender age,
Compassionate the weakness of her sex;
We must not hope to find in *her* soft soul
The strong exertion of a manly courage.——
Support her fainting spirit, and instruct her,
By thy example, how a Roman ought
To bear misfortune. O indulge her weakness!
And be to her the father she will lose.
I leave my daughter to thee—I do more——
I leave to thee the conduct of—thyself,
—Ah, Publius! I perceive thy courage fails—
I see the quivering lip, the starting tear;—
That lip, that tear calls down my mounting soul.
Resume thyself—Oh! do not blast my hope!

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Yes—I'm compos'd—thou wilt not mock my age—
Thou *art*—thou art a *Roman*—and my *son*. [*Exit.*

Pub. And is he gone!—now be thyself, my soul—
Hard is the conflict, but the triumph glorious.
Yes—I must conquer these too tender feelings;
The blood that fills these veins demands it of me;
My father's great example too requires it.
Forgive me, *Rome*, and *glory*, if I yielded
To nature's strong attack—I must subdue it.
Now, Regulus, I *feel* I am thy *son*.

Enter ATTILIA *and* BARCE.

Atti. My brother, I'm distracted, wild with fear—
Tell me, O tell me what I dread to know—
Is it then true?—I cannot speak—my father?

Barce. May we believe the fatal news?

Pub. Yes, Barce.
It is determin'd. Regulus must go.

Atti. Immortal powers!—What say'st thou?

Barce. Can it be?
Thou canst not mean it.

Atti. Then you've all betray'd me.

Pub. Thy grief avails not.

Enter HAMILCAR *and* LICINIUS.

Barce. Pity us, Hamilcar!

Atti. Oh help, Licinius, help the lost Attilia!

Ham. My Barce! there's no hope.

Lici. Ah! my fair mourner,
All's lost.

Atti. What all, Licinius? saidst thou all?
Not one poor glimpse of comfort left behind?
Tell me at least where Regulus is gone:
The daughter shall partake the father's chains,
And share the woes she knew not to prevent. (*Going.*)

Pub. What would thy wild despair? Attilia, stay,
Thou must not follow; this excess of grief
Would much offend him.

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Atti. Dost thou hope to *stop* me?
Pub. I hope thou wilt resume thy better self,
And recollect thy father will not bear——
Atti. I only recollect I am a *daughter*,
A poor, defenceless, helpless, wretched daughter!
Away——and let me follow.
Pub. No, my sister.
Atti. Detain me not—Ah! while thou hold'st me here,
He goes, and I shall never see him more.
Barce. My friend, be comforted, he cannot go
Whilst here Hamilcar stays.
Atti. O Barce, Barce!
Who will advise, who comfort, who assist me?
Hamilcar, pity me.—Thou wilt not answer?
Ham. Rage and astonishment divide my soul.
Atti. Licinius, wilt thou not relieve my sorrows?
Lici. Yes, at my life's expense, my heart's best treasure,
Would'st thou instruct me how.
Atti. My brother too——
Ah! look with mercy on thy sister's woes!
Pub. I will at least instruct thee how to *bear* them.
My sister—yield thee to thy adverse fate;
Think of thy father, think of Regulus;
Has he not taught thee how to brave misfortune?
'Tis but by following his illustrious steps
Thou e'er canst merit to be call'd his daughter.
Atti. And is it thus thou dost advise thy sister?
Are these, ye gods, the feelings of a son?
Indifference here becomes impiety—
Thy savage heart ne'er felt the dear delights
Of filial tenderness—the thousand joys
That flow from blessing and from being bless'd!
No—didst thou love thy father as *I* love him,
Our kindred souls would be in unison;
And all my sighs be echoed back by thine.
Thou would'st—alas!—I know not what I say.—

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Forgive me, Publius—but indeed, my brother,
I do not understand this cruel coldness.

Ham. Thou may'st not—but I understand it well.
His mighty soul, full as to thee it seems
Of Rome, and glory—is enamour'd—caught—
Enraptur'd with the beauties of fair Barce.—
She stays behind if Regulus *departs*.
Behold the cause of all the well-feign'd virtue
Of this mock patriot—curst dissimulation!

Pub. And canst thou entertain such vile suspicions?
Gods! what an outrage to a son like me!

Ham. Yes, Roman: now I see thee as thou art,
Thy naked soul devested of its veil,
Its specious colouring, its dissembled virtues;
Thou hast plotted with the senate to prevent
Th' exchange of captives. All thy subtle arts,
Thy smooth inventions have been set to work—
The base refinements of your *polish'd* land.

Pub. In truth the doubt is worthy of an African.
(*Contemptuously.*)

Ham. I know——

Pub. Peace, Carthaginian, peace, and hear me:
Dost thou not know, that on the very man
Thou hast insulted Barce's fate depends?

Ham. Too well I know, the cruel chance of war
Gave her, a blooming captive, to thy mother;
Who, dying, left the beauteous prize to thee.

Publius. Now, see the use a *Roman* makes of power.
Heaven is my witness how I lov'd the maid!
O she was dearer to my soul than light!
Dear as the vital stream that feeds my heart!
But know my *honour*'s dearer than my love.
I do not even hope *thou* wilt believe me;
Thy brutal soul, as savage as thy clime,
Can never taste those elegant delights,
Those pure refinements, love and glory yield.

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'Tis not to thee I stoop for vindication,
Alike to me thy friendship or thy hate;
But to remove from others a pretence
For branding Publius with the name of villain;
That *they* may see no sentiment but honour
Informs this bosom——Barce, thou art *free*.
Thou hast my leave with him to quit this shore.
Now learn, barbarian, how a *Roman* loves! [*Exit.*

Barce. He cannot mean it!

Ham. Oh exalted virtue!
Which challenges esteem though from a foe.
[*Looking after* PUBLIUS.

Att. Ah! cruel Publius, wilt thou leave me thus?
Thus leave thy sister?

Barce. Didst thou hear, Hamilcar?
Oh! didst thou hear the god-like youth resign me?

(HAMILCAR *and* LICINIUS *seem lost in thought.*)

Ham. Farewell, I will return.

Lic. Farewell, my love! (*To* ATTILIA.)

Barce. Hamilcar, where——

Att. Alas! where art thou going?
(*To* LICINIUS.)

Lic. If possible, to save the life of Regulus.

Att. But by what means!—Ah! how canst thou effect it?

Lic. Since the disease so desperate is become,
We must apply a desperate remedy.

Ham. (*after a long pause.*) Yes—I will mortify this generous foe;
I'll be reveng'd upon this stubborn Roman;
Not by defiance bold, or feats of arms,
But by a means more sure to work its end;
By emulating his exalted worth,
And showing him a virtue like his own;
Such a refin'd revenge as noble minds
Alone can practise, and alone can feel.

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Att. If thou wilt go, Licinius, let Attilia
At least go with thee.

Lic. No, my gentle love,
Too much I prize thy safety and thy peace.
Let me entreat thee stay with Barce here
Till our return.

Att. Then, ere ye go, in pity
Explain the latent purpose of your souls.

Lic. Soon shalt thou know it all—Farewell! Farewell!
Let us keep Regulus in *Rome* or *die!*

(*To* HAMILCAR *as he goes out.*)

Ham. Yes.—These smooth, polish'd Romans shall confess
The soil of *Afric* too produces heroes.
What, though our pride perhaps be less than theirs,
Our virtue may be equal: they shall own
The path of honour's not unknown to Carthage,
Nor, as they arrogantly think, confin'd
To their proud capitol:——Yes—they shall learn
The gods look down on other climes than theirs. [*Exit.*

Att. What gone, *both* gone? What can I think or do?
Licinius leaves me, led by love and virtue
To rouse the citizens to war and tumult,
Which may be fatal to himself and Rome,
And yet, alas! not serve my dearest father.
Protecting Deities! preserve them both!

Barce. Nor is thy Barce more at ease, my friend;
I dread the fierceness of Hamilcar's courage;
Rous'd by the grandeur of thy brother's deed,
And stung by his reproaches, his great soul
Will scorn to be outdone by him in glory.
Yet, let us rise to courage and to life,
Forget the weakness of our helpless sex,
And mount above these coward woman's fears:

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Hope dawns upon my mind—my prospect clears,
And every cloud now brightens into day.

Att. How different are our souls! Thy sanguine temper,
Flush'd with the native vigour of thy soil,
Supports thy spirits; while the sad Attilia,
Sinking with more than all her sex's fears,
Sees not a beam of hope; or, if she sees it,
'Tis not the bright, warm splendour of the sun;
It is a sickly and uncertain glimmer,
Of instantaneous light'ning passing by.
It shows, but not diminishes the danger,
And leaves my poor benighted soul as dark
As it had never shone.

Baree. Come, let us go;
Yes, joys unlook'd for now shall gild thy days,
And brighter suns reflect propitious rays. [*Exeunt.*

Scene—a hall looking towards the garden.

Enter REGULUS *speaking to one of* HAMILCAR'S *attendants.*

Where's your ambassador! where is Hamilcar?
Ere this he doubtless knows the senate's will.
Go seek him out—tell him we must depart——
Rome has no *hope* for *him*, or *wish* for *me*.
Longer delay were criminal in *both*.

Enter MANLIUS.

Reg. He comes. The consul comes! my noble friend!
O let me strain thee to this grateful heart,
And thank thee for the vast, vast debt I owe thee!
But for *thy* friendship I had been a wretch——
Had been compell'd to shameful *liberty*.
To thee I owe the glory of these chains,
My faith inviolate, my fame preserv'd,
My honour, virtue, glory, bondage—all!

Man. But we shall lose thee, so it is decreed——
Thou must depart?

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Reg. Because I must depart
You will not lose me; I were lost indeed
Did I remain in Rome.

Man. Ah! Regulus,
Why, why so late do I begin to love thee?
Alas! why have the adverse fates decreed,
I ne'er must give thee other proofs of friendship,
Than those, so fatal and so full of wo?

Reg. Thou hast perform'd the duties of a friend:
Of a just, faithful, true, and noble friend:
Yet, generous as thou art, if thou constrain me
To sink beneath a weight of obligation,
I could—yes, Manlius—I could ask still more.

Man. Explain thyself.

Reg. I think I have fulfill'd
The various duties of a citizen;
Nor have I aught beside to do for Rome.
Now, nothing for the public good remains.
Manlius, I recollect I am a father!
My Publius! my Attilia! ah! my friend,
They are—(forgive the weakness of a parent)
To my fond heart dear as the drops that warm it.
Next to my country they're my all of life;
And, if a weak old man be not deceiv'd,
They will not shame that country. Yes, my friend,
The love of virtue blazes in their souls.
As yet these tender plants are immature,
And ask the fostering hand of cultivation:
Heaven, in its wisdom, would not let their *father*
Accomplish this great work.—To thee, my friend,
The tender parent delegates the trust:
Do not refuse a poor man's legacy;
I do bequeath my orphans to thy love—
If thou wilt kindly take them to thy bosom,
Their loss will be repaid with usury.

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O let the father owe his glory to thee,
The children their protection!

Man. Regulus,
With grateful joy my heart accepts the trust:
Oh! I will shield, with jealous tenderness,
The precious blossoms from a blasting world.
In me thy children shall possess a father,
Though not as worthy, yet as fond as thee.
The pride be mine to fill their youthful breasts
With every virtue—'twill not cost me much:
I shall have nought to teach, nor they to learn,
But the great history of their god-like sire.

Reg. I will not hurt the grandeur of thy virtue,
By paying thee so poor a thing as thanks.
Now all is over, and I bless the gods,
I've nothing more to do.

Enter PUBLIUS *in haste.*

Pub. O Regulus!

Reg. Say what has happened?

Pub. Rome is in a tumult—
There's scarce a citizen but runs to arms—
They will not let thee go.

Reg. Is't possible?
Can Rome so far forget her dignity
As to desire this infamous exchange?
I blush to think it!

Pub. Ah! not so, my father.
Rome cares not for the peace, nor for th' exchange;
She only wills that Regulus shall stay.

Reg. How, stay? my oath—my faith—my honour! ah!
Do they forget?

Pub. No: Every man exclaims
That neither faith nor honour should be kept
With Carthaginian perfidy and fraud.

Reg. Gods! Gods! on what vile principles they reason!
Can guilt in Carthage palliate guilt in Rome,

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Or vice in one absolve it in another?
Ah! who hereafter shall be criminal,
If precedents are us'd to justify
The blackest crimes.

Pub. Th' infatuated people
Have called the augurs to the sacred fane,
There to determine this momentous point.

Reg. I have no need of *oracles*, my son;
Honour's the oracle of honest men.
I gave my promise, which I will observe
With most religious strictness. Rome, 'tis true,
Had power to chuse the peace, or change of slaves;
But whether Regulus return, or not,
Is *his* concern, not the concern of *Rome*.
That was a public, *this* a private care.
Publius! thy father is not what he was;
I am the slave of *Carthage*, nor has Rome
Power to dispose of captives not her own.
Guards! let us to the port.—Farewell, my friend.

Man. Let me entreat thee stay; for should'st thou go
To stem this tumult of the populace,
They will by force detain thee: then, alas!
Both Regulus and Rome must break their faith.

Reg. What! must I then remain?

Man. No, Regulus,
I will not check thy great career of glory:
Thou shalt depart; meanwhile I'll try to calm
This wild tumultuous uproar of the people.
The cousular authority shall still them.

Reg. Thy virtue is my safeguard——but——

Man. Enough.—
I know *thy* honour, and trust thou to *mine*.
I am a *Roman*, and I feel some sparks
Of Regulus's virtue in my breast.
Though fate denies me thy illustrious chains,
I will at least endeavour to *deserve* them. [*Exit.*

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Reg. How is my country alter'd! how, alas,
Is the great spirit of old Rome extinct!
Restraint and *force* must now be put to use
To *make* her virtuous. She must be *compell'd*
To faith and honour.—Ah! what Publius here?
And dost thou leave so tamely to my friend
The honour to assist me? Go, my boy,
'Twill make me *more* in love with chains and death,
To owe them to a *son*.

Pub. I go; my father—
I will, I will obey thee.

Reg. Do not sigh—
One sigh will check the progress of thy glory.

Pub. Yes, I will own the pangs of death itself
Would be less cruel than these agonies:
Yet do not frown austerely on thy son:
His *anguish* is his *virtue:* If to conquer
The feelings of my soul were *easy* to me,
'Twould be no merit. Do not then defraud
The sacrifice I make thee of its worth.

[*Exeunt severally.*

MANLIUS, ATTILIA.

Att. (*speaking as she enters.*) Where is the consul?—
where, oh! where is Manlius?
I come to breathe the voice of mourning to him,
I come to crave his mercy, to conjure him
To whisper peace to my afflicted bosom,
And heal the anguish of a wounded spirit.

Man. What would the daughter of my noble friend?

Att. (*kneeling.*) If ever pity's sweet emotions touch'd
thee—
If ever gentle love assail'd thy breast—
If ever virtuous friendship fir'd thy soul—
By the dear names of husband, and of parent—
By all the soft yet powerful ties of nature—
If e'er thy lisping infants charm'd thine ear

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And waken'd all the father in thy soul—
If e'er thou hop'st to have thy latter days
Blest by their love, and sweeten'd by their duty—
Oh! hear a kneeling, weeping, wretched daughter,
Who begs a father's life—nor hers alone,
But Rome's—his country's father.

Man. Gentle maid!
Oh! spare this soft, subduing eloquence!—
Nay, rise. I shall forget I am a Roman—
Forget the mighty debt I owe my country—
Forget the fame and glory of thy father.
I must conceal this weakness. (*Turns from her.*)

Att. (*rises eagerly.*) Ah! you weep!
Indulge, indulge, my lord, the virtuous softness:
Was ever sight so graceful, so becoming,
As pity's tear upon the hero's cheek?

Man. No more—I must not hear thee. (*Going.*)

Att. How! not hear me!
You must—you shall—nay, nay return, my lord—
Oh! fly not from me——look upon my woes,
And imitate the mercy of the gods:
'Tis not their thunder that excites our reverence,
'Tis their mild mercy, and forgiving love.
'Twill add a brighter lustre to thy laurels,
When men shall say, and proudly point thee out,
"Behold the consul!—He who sav'd his friend."
Oh! what a tide of joy will overwhelm thee!
Who will not envy thee thy glorious feelings!

Man. Thy father scorns his liberty and life,
Nor will accept of either, at th' expense
Of honour, virtue, glory, faith, and Rome.

Att. Think you behold the god-like Regulus
The prey of unrelenting savage foes,
Ingenious only in contriving ill:——
Eager to glut their hunger of revenge,
They'll plot such new, such dire, unheard-of tortures—

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Such dreadful, and such complicated vengeance,
As ev'n the Punic annals have not known;
And, as they heap fresh torments on his head,
They'll glory in their genius for destruction.
—Ah! Manlius—now methinks I see my father—
My faithful fancy, full of his idea,
Presents him to me—mangled, gash'd, and torn—
Stretch'd on the rack in writhing agony—
The torturing pincers tear his quivering flesh,
While the dire murderers smile upon his wounds—
His groans their music, and his pangs their sport.
And if they lend some interval of ease,
Some dear-bought intermission, meant to make
The following pang more exquisitely felt,
Th' insulting executioners exclaim,
—"Now, Roman! feel the vengeance thou hast scorn'd!"

Man. Repress thy sorrows——

Att. Can the friend of Regulus
Advise his daughter not to mourn his fate?
How cold, alas! is Friendship when compar'd
To ties of blood—to Nature's powerful impulse!
Yes—she asserts her empire in my soul,
'Tis Nature pleads—she will—she must be heard;
With warm, resistless eloquence she pleads.—
Ah, thou art soften'd!—see—the consul yields—
The feelings triumph—tenderness prevails—
The Roman is subdued—the daughter conquers!
(*catching hold of his robe.*)

Man. Ah! hold me not—I must not, cannot stay,
The softness of thy sorrow is contagious;
I too may feel when I should only reason.
I dare not hear thee—Regulus and Rome,
The patriot and the friend—all, all forbid it.
(*breaks from her, and exit.*)

Att. Oh feeble grasp!—and is he gone, quite gone?
Hold, hold thy empire, Reason, firmly hold it,

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Or rather quit at once thy feeble throne,
Since thou but serv'st to show me what I've lost,
To heighten all the horrors that await me;
To summon up a wild, distracted crowd
Of fatal images, to shake my soul,
To scare sweet peace, and banish hope itself:
Farewell! delusive dreams of joy, farewell!
Come, fell Despair! thou pale ey'd spectre, come,
For thou shalt be Attilia's inmate now,
And thou shalt grow, and twine about her heart,
And she shall be so much enamour'd of thee,
The pageant Pleasure ne'er shall interpose
Her gaudy presence to divide you more.

(*stands in an attitude of silent grief.*)

Enter LICINIUS.

Lic. At length I've found thee—ah, my charming maid!
How have I sought thee out with anxious fondness!
Alas! she hears me not.——My best Attilia!
Ah! grief oppresses every gentle sense.
Still, still she hears not——'tis Licinius speaks,
He comes to sooth the anguish of thy spirit,
And hush thy tender sorrows into peace.

Att. Who's he that dares assume the voice of love,
And comes unbidden to these dreary haunts?
Steals on the sacred treasury of wo,
And breaks the league Despair and I have made?

Lic. 'Tis one who comes the messenger of Heav'n,
To talk of peace, of comfort, and of joy.

Att. Didst thou not mock me with the sound of joy?
Thou little know'st the anguish of my soul,
If thou believ'st I ever can again,
So long the wretched sport of angry fortune,
Admit delusive Hope to my sad bosom.
No——I abjure the flatterer and her train.

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Let those, who ne'er have been like me deceiv'd,
Embrace the fair fantastic sycophant—
For I, alas! am wedded to Despair,
And will not hear the sound of comfort more.

Lic. Cease, cease, my love, this tender voice of wo,
Though softer than the dying cygnet's plaint:
She ever chants her most melodious strain
When death and sorrow harmonize her note.

Att. Yes—I will listen now with fond delight;
For death and sorrow are my darling themes.
Well!—what hast thou to say of death and sorrow?
Believe me, thou wilt find me apt to listen,
And, if my tongue be slow to answer thee,
Instead of words I'll give thee sighs and tears.

Lic. I come to dry thy tears, not make them flow;
The gods once more propitious smile upon us,
Joy shall again await each happy morn,
And ever-new delight shall crown the day!
Yes, Regulus shall live——

Att. Ah me! what say'st thou?
Alas! I'm but a poor, weak, trembling woman—
I cannot bear these wild extremes of fate—
Then mock me not.—I think thou art Licinius,
The generous lover, and the faithful friend!
I think thou would'st not sport with my afflictions.

Lic. Mock thy afflictions!—May eternal Jove,
And every power at whose dread shrine we worship,
Blast all the hopes my fond ideas form,
If I deceive thee! Regulus shall live,
Shall live to give thee to Licinius' arms.
Oh! we will smooth his downward path of life,
And after a long length of virtuous years,
At the last verge of honourable age,
When nature's glimmering lamp goes gently out,
We'll close, together close his eyes in peace—
Together drop the sweetly painful tear—

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Then copy out his virtues in our lives.

Att. And shall we be so blest? is't possible?
Forgive me, my Licinius, if I doubt thee.
Fate never gave such exquisite delight
As flattering hope hath imag'd to thy soul.
But how?——Explain this bounty of the gods.

Lic. Thou know'st what influence the name of tribune
Gives its possessor o'er the people's minds:
That power I have exerted, nor in vain;
All are prepar'd to second my designs:
The plot is ripe—there's not a man but swears
To keep thy god-like father here in Rome——
To save his life at hazard of his own.

Att. By what gradation does my joy ascend!
I thought that if my father had been sav'd
By any means, I had been rich in bliss:
But that he lives, and lives preserv'd by thee;
Is such a prodigality of fate,
I cannot bear my joy with moderation:
Heaven should have dealt it with a scantier hand,
And not have shower'd such plenteous blessings on me;
They are too great, too flattering to be real;
'Tis some delightful vision, which enchants,
And cheats my senses, weaken'd by misfortune.

Lic. We'll seek thy father, and meanwhile, my fair,
Compose thy sweet emotions ere thou see'st him.
Pleasure itself is painful in excess;
For joys, like sorrows, in extreme, oppress:
The gods themselves our pious cares approve,
And to reward our virtue crown our love.

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ACT V.

An apartment in the ambassador's palace—guards and other attendants seen at a distance.

Ham. Where is this wond'rous man, this matchless hero,
This arbiter of kingdoms and of kings,
This delegate of Heaven, this Roman god?
I long to show his soaring mind an equal,
And bring it to the standard of humanity.
What pride, what glory will it be to fix
An obligation on his stubborn soul!
Oh! to constrain a foe to be obliged!
The very thought exalts me e'en to rapture.

Enter REGULUS *and guards.*

Ham. Well, Regulus!—At last—

Reg. I know it all;
I know the motive of thy just complaint—
Be not alarm'd at this licentious uproar
Of the mad populace. I will depart—
Fear not—I will not stay in Rome alive.

Ham. What dost thou mean by uproar and alarms?
Hamilcar does not come to vent complaints;
He rather comes to prove, that Afric too
Produces heroes, and that Tiber's banks
May find a rival on the Punic coast.

Reg. Be it so.—'Tis not a time for vain debate:
Collect thy people.—Let us strait depart.

Ham. Lend me thy hearing first.

Reg. O patience, patience!

Ham. Is it esteem'd a glory to be grateful?

Reg. The time has been when 'twas a duty only,
But 'tis a duty now so little practis'd,
That to perform it is become a glory.

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Ham. If to fulfil it should expose to danger!——
Reg. It rises then to an illustrious virtue.
Ham. Then grant this merit to an African.
Give me a patient hearing——Thy great son,
As delicate in honour as in love,
Hath nobly given my Barce to my arms;
And yet, I know he doats upon the maid.
I come to emulate the generous deed;
He gave me back my love, and in return
I will restore his father.
Reg. Ah! what say'st thou?
Wilt thou preserve me then?
Ham. I will.
Reg. But how?
Ham. By leaving thee at liberty to fly.
Reg. Ah!
Ham. I will dismiss my guards on some pretence,
Meanwhile do thou escape, and lie conceal'd:
I will affect a rage I shall not feel,
Unmoor my ships, and sail for Africa.
Reg. Abhorr'd barbarian!
Ham. Well, what dost thou say?
Art thou not much surpris'd?
Reg. I am indeed.
Ham. Thou could'st not then have hop'd it?
Reg. No! I could not.
Ham. And yet I'm not a Roman.
Reg. (*smiling contemptuously.*) I perceive it.
Ham. You may retire. (*aloud to the guards.*)
Reg. No!—Stay, I charge you stay.
Ham. And wherefore stay?
Reg. I thank thee for thy offer,
But I shall go with thee.
Ham. 'Tis well, proud man!
Thou dost despise me then?
Reg. No—but I pity thee.

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Ham. Why pity me?

Reg. Because thy poor, dark soul
Hath never felt the piercing ray of virtue.
Know, African! the scheme thou dost propose
Would injure me, thy country, and thyself.

Ham. Thou dost mistake.

Reg. Who was it gave thee power
To rule the destiny of Regulus?
Am I a slave to Carthage, or to thee?

Ham. What does it signify from whom, proud Roman!
Thou dost receive this benefit?

Reg. A benefit?
O savage ignorance! is it a benefit
To lie, elope, deceive, and be a villain?

Ham. What! not when life itself, when all's at stake?
Know'st thou my countrymen prepare thee tortures
That shock imagination but to think of?
Thou wilt be mangled, butcher'd, rack'd impal'd.
Does not thy nature shrink?

Reg. (*smiling at his threats.*) Hamilcar! no.
Dost thou not know the Roman genius better?
We live on honour—'tis our food, our life,
The motive, and the measure of our deeds!
We look on death as on a common object;
The tongue nor faulters, nor the cheek turns pale,
Nor the calm eye is mov'd at sight of him
We court, and we embrace him undismay'd;
We smile at tortures if they lead to glory,
And only cowardice and guilt appal us.

Ham. Fine sophistry! the valour of the tongue,
The heart disclaims it; leave this pomp of words,
And cease dissembling with a friend like me.
I know that life is dear to all who live,
That death is dreadful—yes, and must be fear'd,
E'en by the frozen apathists of Rome.

Reg. Did I fear death when on Bagrada's banks

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I fac'd and slew the formidable serpent
That made your boldest Africans recoil,
And shrink with horror, though the monster liv'd
A native inmate of their own parch'd deserts?
Did I fear death before the gates of Adis?
Ask Bostar, or let Asdrubal confess.

Ham. Or shall I rather of Xantippus ask,
Who dar'd to undeceive deluded Rome,
And prove this vaunter not invincible?
'Tis even said, in Africa I mean,
He made a prisoner of this demi-god—
Did we not triumph then?

Reg. Vain boaster! no.
No Carthaginian conquer'd Regulus;
Xantippus was a Greek—a brave one too:
Yet what distinction did your Afric make
Between the man who serv'd her, and her foe;
I was the object of her open hate:
He, of her secret, dark malignity.
He durst not trust the nation he had sav'd;
He knew, and therefore fear'd you.—Yes, he knew
Where once you were oblig'd, you ne'er forgave.
Could you forgive at all, you'd rather pardon
The man who hated, than the man who serv'd you.
Xantippus found his ruin ere it reach'd him,
Lurking behind your honours and rewards,
Found it in your feign'd courtesies and fawnings.
When vice intends to strike a master stroke,
It's veil is smiles, it's language protestations.
The Spartan's merit threaten'd, but his service
Compell'd his ruin.—Both you could not pardon.

Ham. Come, come, I know full well——

Reg. Barbarian! peace.
I've heard too much—Go, call thy followers:
Prepare thy ships, and learn to do thy duty.

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Ham. Yes!—show thyself intrepid, and insult me;
Call mine the blindness of barbarian friendship.
On Tiber's banks I hear thee, and am calm:
But know, thou scornful Roman! that too soon
In Carthage thou may'st fear and feel my vengeance:
Thy cold, obdurate pride shall there confess,
Though Rome may talk—'tis Africa can punish. [*Exit.*

Reg. Farewell! I've not a thought to waste on thee.
Where is the consul? why does Publius stay?
Alas! I fear—but see Attilia comes!—

Enter ATTILIA.

Reg. What brings thee here, my child? what eager joy
Transports thee thus?

Att. I cannot speak—my father!
Joy choaks my utterance—Rome, dear grateful Rome,
(Oh! may her cup with blessings overflow)
Gives up our common destiny to thee;
Faithful and constant to the advice thou gav'st her,
She will not hear of peace, or change of slaves,
But she insists—reward and bless her, gods!—
That thou shalt here remain.

Reg. What! with the shame—

Att. Oh! no—the sacred senate hath consider'd
That, when to Carthage thou did'st pledge thy faith,
Thou wast a captive, and that being such,
Thou could'st not bind thyself in covenant.

Reg. He who can die is always free, my child!
Learn farther, he who owns another's strength
Confesses his own weakness.—Let them know,
I swore I would return because I chose it,
And will return, because I swore to do it.

Enter PUBLIUS.

Pub. Vain is that hope, my father.

Reg. Who shall stop me?

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Pub. All Rome.——The citizens are up in arms:
In vain would reason stop the growing torrent;
In vain would'st thou attempt to reach the port,
The way is barr'd by thronging multitudes:
The other streets of Rome are all deserted.

Reg. Where, where is Manlius?

Pub. He is still thy friend;
His single voice opposes a whole people;
He threats this moment and the next entreats,
But all in vain; none hear him, none obey.
The general fury rises e'en to madness.
The axes tremble in the lictors hands,
Who pale and spiritless want power to use them—
And one wild scene of anarchy prevails.

Reg. Farewell! my daughter. Publius follow me.

[*Exit* PUBLIUS.

Att. Ah! where? I tremble——

(*detaining* REGULUS.)

Reg. To assist my friend—
T' upbraid my hapless country with her crime—
To keep unstain'd the glory of these chains—
To go, or perish.

Att. Oh! have mercy!

Reg. Hold;
I have been patient with thee; have indulg'd
Too much the fond affections of thy soul;
It is enough; thy grief would now offend
Thy father's honour; do not let thy tears
Conspire with Rome to rob me of my triumph.

Atti. Alas! it wounds my soul.

Reg. I know it does.
I know 'twill grieve thy gentle heart to lose me;
But think, thou mak'st the sacrifice to Rome,
And all is well again.

Atti. Alas! my father,
T' aught beside——

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Reg. What would'st thou do, my child?
Canst thou direct the destiny of Rome,
And boldly plead amid th' assembled senate?
Canst thou, forgetting all thy sex's softness,
Fiercely engage in hardy deeds of arms?
Canst thou encounter labour, toil and famine,
Fatigue and hardships, watchings, cold and heat?
Canst thou attempt to serve thy country thus?
Thou canst not:—but thou may'st sustain my loss
Without these agonizing pangs of grief,
And set a bright example of submission,
Worthy a Roman's daughter.

Atti. Yet such fortitude—

Reg. Is a most painful virtue;—but Attilia
Is Regulus's daughter, and must have it.

Atti. I will entreat the gods to give it me.
Ah! thou art offended! I have lost thy love.

Reg. Is this concern a mark that thou hast lost it?
I cannot, cannot spurn my weeping child.
Receive this proof of my parental fondness;—
Thou lov'st Licinius—He too loves my daughter.
I give thee to his wishes; I do more—
I give thee to his virtues.—Yes, Attilia,
The noble youth deserves this dearest pledge
Thy father's friendship ever can bestow.

Atti. My lord! my father! wilt thou, canst thou leave me?
The tender father will not quit his child!

Reg. I am, I am thy father! as a proof,
I leave thee my example how to suffer.
My child! I have a heart within this bosom;
That heart has passions—see in what we differ;
Passion—which is thy tyrant—is my slave.

Atti. Ah! stay my father. Ah!—

Reg. Farewell! farewell! [*Exit.*

Atti. Yes, Regulus! I feel thy spirit here,
Thy mighty spirit struggling in this breast,

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And it shall conquer all these coward feelings,
It shall subdue the woman in my soul;
A Roman virgin should be something more—
Should dare above her sex's narrow limits—
And I will dare—and mis'ry shall assist me—
My father! I will be indeed thy daughter!
The hero shall no more disdain his child;
Attilia shall not be the only branch
That yields dishonour to the parent tree.

Enter BARCE.

Barce. Attilia! it is true that Regulus,
In spite of senate, people, augurs, friends,
And children will depart?

Atti. Yes, it is true.

Barce. Oh! what romantic madness!

Atti. You forget—
Barce! the deeds of heroes claim respect.

Barce. Dost thou approve a virtue which must lead
To chains, to tortures, and to certain death?

Atti. Barce! those chains, those tortures, and that death,
Will be his triumph.

Barce. Thou art pleas'd, Attilia,
By heav'n thou dost exult in his destruction!

Atti. Ah! pitying powers. (*weeps.*)

Barce. I do not comprehend thee.

Atti. No, Barce, I believe it.—Why, how should'st thou?
If I mistake not, thou wast born in Carthage,
In a barbarian land, where never child
Was taught to triumph in a father's chains.

Barce. Yet thou dost weep—thy tears at least are honest,
For they refuse to share thy tongue's deceit;
They speak the genuine language of affliction,
And tell the sorrows that oppress thy soul.

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Atti. Grief, that dissolves in tears, relieves the heart.
When congregated vapors melt in rain,
The sky is calm'd, and all's serene again. [*Exit.*

Barce. Why, what a strange, fantastic land is this!
This love of glory's the disease of Rome;
It makes her mad, it is a wild delirium,
An universal and contagious frenzy;
It preys on all, it spares nor sex nor age:
The consul envies Regulus his chains—
He, not less mad, contemns his life and freedom—
The daughter glories in the father's ruin—
And Publius, more distracted than the rest,
Resigns the object that his soul adores,
For this vain phantom, for this empty glory.
This may be virtue; but I thank the gods,
The soul of Barce's not a Roman soul. [*Exit.*

Scene within sight of the Tiber—Ships ready for the embarkation of Regulus and the ambassador—Tribune and people stopping up the passage—Consul and lictors endeavouring to clear it.

MANLIUS *and* LICINIUS *advance.*

Lic. Rome will not suffer Regulus to go.

Man. I thought the consul and the senators
Had been a part of Rome.

Lic. I grant they are—
But still the people are the greater part.

Man. The greater, not the wiser.

Lic. The less cruel.——
Full of esteem and gratitude to Regulus,
We would preserve his life.

Man. And we his honour.

Lic. His honour!——

Man. Yes. Time presses. Words are vain.
Make way there—clear the passage.

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Lic. On your lives,
Stir not a man.

Man. I do command you, go.

Lic. And I forbid it.

Man. Clear the way, my friends.
How dares Licinius thus oppose the consul?

Lic. How dar'st thou, Manlius, thus oppose the tribune?

Man. I'll show thee what I dare, imprudent boy!—
Lictors, force through the passage.

Lic. Romans, guard it.

Man. Gods! is my power resisted then with arms?
Thou dost affront the majesty of Rome.

Lic. The majesty of Rome is in the people;
Thou dost insult it by opposing them.

People. Let noble Regulus remain in Rome.

Man. My friends, let me explain this treacherous scheme.

People. We will not hear thee——Regulus shall stay.

Man. What! none obey me?

People. Regulus shall stay.

Man. Romans, attend.——

People. Let Regulus remain.

Enter REGULUS, *followed by* PUBLIUS, ATTILLA, HAMILCAR, BARCE, *&c.*

Reg. Let Regulus remain! what do I hear?
Is't possible the wish should come from you?
Can Romans give, or Regulus accept,
A life of infamy? Is't possible?
Where is the ancient virtue of my country?
Rise, rise, ye mighty spirits of old Rome!
I do invoke you from your silent tombs;
Fabricius, Cocles, and Camillus, rise,
And show your sons what their great fathers were.
My countrymen, what crime have I committed?
Alas! how has the wretched Regulus
Deserv'd your hatred?

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Lic. Hatred? ah! my friend,
It is our love would break these cruel chains.
Reg. If you deprive me of my chains, I'm nothing;
They are my honours, riches, titles—all!
They'll shame my enemies, and grace my country;
They'll waft her glory to remotest climes,
Beyond her provinces and conquer'd realms,
Where yet her conq'ring eagles never flew;
Nor shall she blush hereafter if she find
Recorded with her faithful citizens,
The name of Regulus, the captive Regulus.
My countrymen! what, think you, kept in awe
The Volsci, Sabines, Æqui, and Hernici?
The arms of Rome alone? no, 'twas her virtue;
That sole surviving good, which brave men keep
Though fate and warring worlds combine against them:
This still is mine—and I'll preserve it, Romans!
The wealth of Plutus shall not bribe it from me!
If you, alas! require this sacrifice,
Carthage herself was less my foe than Rome;
She took my freedom—she could take no more;
But Rome, to crown her work, would take my honour.
My friends! if you deprive me of my chains,
I am no more than any other slave:
Yes, Regulus, becomes a common captive,
A wretched, lying, perjur'd fugitive!
But if, to grace my bonds, you leave my honour,
I shall be still a Roman, though a slave.
Lic. What faith should be observ'd with savages?
What promise should be kept which bonds extort?
Reg. Unworthy subterfuge! ah! let us leave
To the wild Arab and the faithless Moor
These wretched maxims of deceit and fraud:
Examples ne'er can justify the coward:
The brave man never seeks a vindication,
Save from his own just bosom and the gods;

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From principle, not precedent he acts:
As that arraigns him, or as that acquits,
He stands, or falls; condemn'd or justify'd.

Lic. Rome is no more if Regulus departs.

Reg. Let Rome remember Regulus must die!
Nor would the moment of my death be distant,
If Nature's work had been reserv'd for Nature:
What Carthage means to do, she would have done,
As speedily, perhaps, at least as surely.
My wearied life has almost reach'd its goal;
The once-warm current stagnates in these veins,
Or through its icy channels slowly creeps——
View the weak arm; mark the pale, furrow'd cheek,
The slacken'd sinew, and the dim sunk eye,
And tell me then I must not think of dying!
How can I serve you else? My feeble limbs
Would totter now beneath the armour's weight,
The burthen of that body it once shielded.
You see, my friends, you see, my countrymen,
I can no longer show myself a Roman,
Except by dying like one———Gracious Heaven
Points out a way to crown my days with glory;
O do not frustrate then the will of Jove,
And close a life of virtue with disgrace.
Come, come, I know my noble Romans better;
I see your souls, I read repentance in them;
You all applaud me—nay, you wish my chains:
'Twas nothing but excess of love misled you,
And, as you're Romans, you will conquer that.
Yes!—I perceive your weakness is subdu'd—
Seize, seize the moment of returning virtue;
Throw to the ground, my sons, those hostile arms;
Retard no longer Regulus's triumph:
I do request it of you as a friend,
I call you to your duty, as a patriot,
And—were I still your gen'ral, I'd command you.

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Lic. Lay down your arms—let Regulus depart.
(*To the people, who clear the way, and quit their arms.*)
Reg. Gods! gods! I thank you—you indeed are righteous.
Pub. See every man disarm'd. Oh, Rome! oh, father!
Att. Hold, hold, my heart. Alas! they all obey.
Reg. The way is clear. Hamilcar, I attend thee.
Ham. Why, I begin to envy this old man! (*aside.*)
Man. Not the proud victor on the day of triumph,
Warm from the slaughter of dispeopled realms,
Though conquer'd princes grace his chariot wheels,
Though tributary monarchs wait his nod,
And vanquish'd nations bend the knee before him,
E'er shone with half the lustre that surrounds
This voluntary sacrifice for Rome!
Who loves his country will obey her laws;
Who most obeys them is the truest patriot.
Reg. Be our last parting worthy of ourselves.
Farewell! my friends.—I bless the gods who rule us,
Since I must leave you, that I leave you, Romans.
Preserve the glorious name untainted still,
And you shall be the rulers of the globe,
The arbiters of earth. The farthest east,
Beyond where Ganges rolls his rapid flood,
Shall proudly emulate the Roman name.
(*Kneels.*) Ye gods, the guardians of this glorious people,
Who watch with jealous eye Æneas' race,
This land of heroes I commit to you!
This ground, these walls, this people be your care!
Oh! bless them, bless them with a liberal hand!
Let fortitude and valour, truth and justice,
Forever flourish and increase among them!
And if some baneful planet threat the capitol
With its malignant influence, oh! avert it.—
Be Regulus the victim of your wrath.—
On this white head be all your vengeance pour'd,

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But spare, oh! spare, and bless immortal Rome!
Ah! tears? my Romans weep! Farewell! farewell!

ATTILIA *struggles to get to* REGULUS, *is prevented—she faints—he fixes his eye steadily on her for some time, and then departs to the ships.*

Man. (*looking after him.*) Farewell! farewell! thou glory of mankind!
Protector, father, saviour of thy country!
Through Regulus the Roman name shall live,
Shall triumph over time, and mock oblivion.
Farewell! thou pride of this immortal coast!
'Tis Rome alone a Regulus can boast.

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EPILOGUE.

BY DAVID GARRICK, ESQ.

WHAT son of physic, but his art extends,
As well as hand, when call'd on by his friends?
What landlord is so weak to make you fast,
When guests like you bespeak a good repast?
But weaker still were he whom fate has plac'd
To sooth your cares, and gratify your taste,
Should he neglect to bring before your eyes
Those dainty dramas which from genius rise;
Whether your luxury be to smile or weep,
His and your profits just proportion keep.
To night he brought, nor fears a due reward,
A Roman patriot by a female bard.
Britons who feel his flame, his worth will rate,
No common spirit his, no common fate.
INFLEXIBLE and CAPTIVE must be great.
"How! cries a sucking fop, thus lounging, straddling,
(Whose head shows want of ballast by its noddling)
A woman write! Learn, madam, of your betters,
And read a noble lord's post hù-mous letters.
There you will learn the sex may merit praise
By making puddings—not by making plays:
They can make tea and mischief, dance and sing;
Their heads, though full of feathers, can't take wing."
I thought they could, sir; now and then by chance,
Maids fly to Scotland, and some wives to France.
He still went nodding on—"Do all she can,
Woman's a trifle—play-thing—like her fan."
Right, sir, and when a wife the *rattle* of a man.

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And shall such *things* as these become the test
Of female worth? the fairest and the best
Of all heaven's creatures? for so Milton sung us,
And, with such champions, who shall dare to wrong us?
Come forth, proud man, in all your pow'rs array'd:
Shine out in all your splendor—Who's afraid?
Who on French wit has made a glorious war,
Defended Shakspeare, and subdu'd Voltaire—
Woman!*—Who, rich in knowledge, knows no pride,
Can boast ten tongues, and yet not satisfied?
Woman!†—Who lately sung the sweetest lay?
A woman! woman! woman! ‡ still I say.
Well then, who dares deny our power and might?
Will any married man dispute our right?
Speak boldly, sirs—your wives are not in sight.
What! are you silent? then you are content;
Silence, the proverb tells us, gives consent.
Critics, will you allow our honest claim?
Are you dumb too? This night has fix'd our fame.

* Mrs. Montague, author of an essay on the writings of Shakspeare.
† Mrs. Carter, well known for her skill in ancient and modern languages.
‡ Miss Aikin, whose poems were just published.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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